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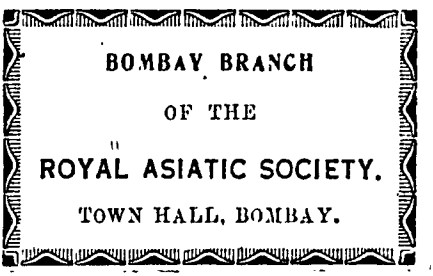

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LEAVES FROM
AN AFGHAN SCRAPBOOK

SIRDAR NASARULLAH KHAN.

The Amir's powerful brother who has now taken up Government work again, after living in retirement for two years in order to commit the whole of the Koran to memory.

LEAVES FROM AN AFGHAN SCRAPBOOK

THE EXPERIENCES OF AN ENGLISH OFFICIAL AND HIS WIFE IN KABUL

BY ERNEST AND ANNIE THORNTON

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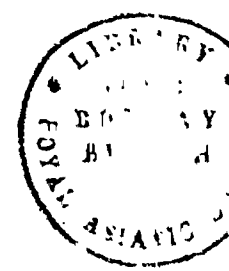
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS AND SKETCHES BY THE AUTHORS, AND OTHER SOURCES



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TO

DR. ABDUL GHANI,

WHOSE KINDNESS AND HONESTY WERE LIKE

A BRIGHT STAR SHINING IN THE DARK AT KABUL,

WE DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFACE

In the pages of this book we have simply endeavoured to supply answers to the numerous questions, some of them a trifle embarrassing, some of them comic, which have repeatedly been put to us at home about Afghan life and things in general in Kabul city.

The use of a few Persian words here and there was unavoidable, but in order to give the Afghan pronunciation of these the Persian spelling is in some cases altered a little.

Our journey down to India (under a specially good escort) in 1906 is described, instead of that which we took in 1908, as an account of the latter would not be at all pleasant to read.

We can claim at least one merit for the book—viz., its truthfulness; for we have only written about things as we saw them, and we have not ventured in any respect to go beyond the limits indicated by the title.

ERNEST T. THORNTON.
ANNIE THORNTON.

December, 1909.

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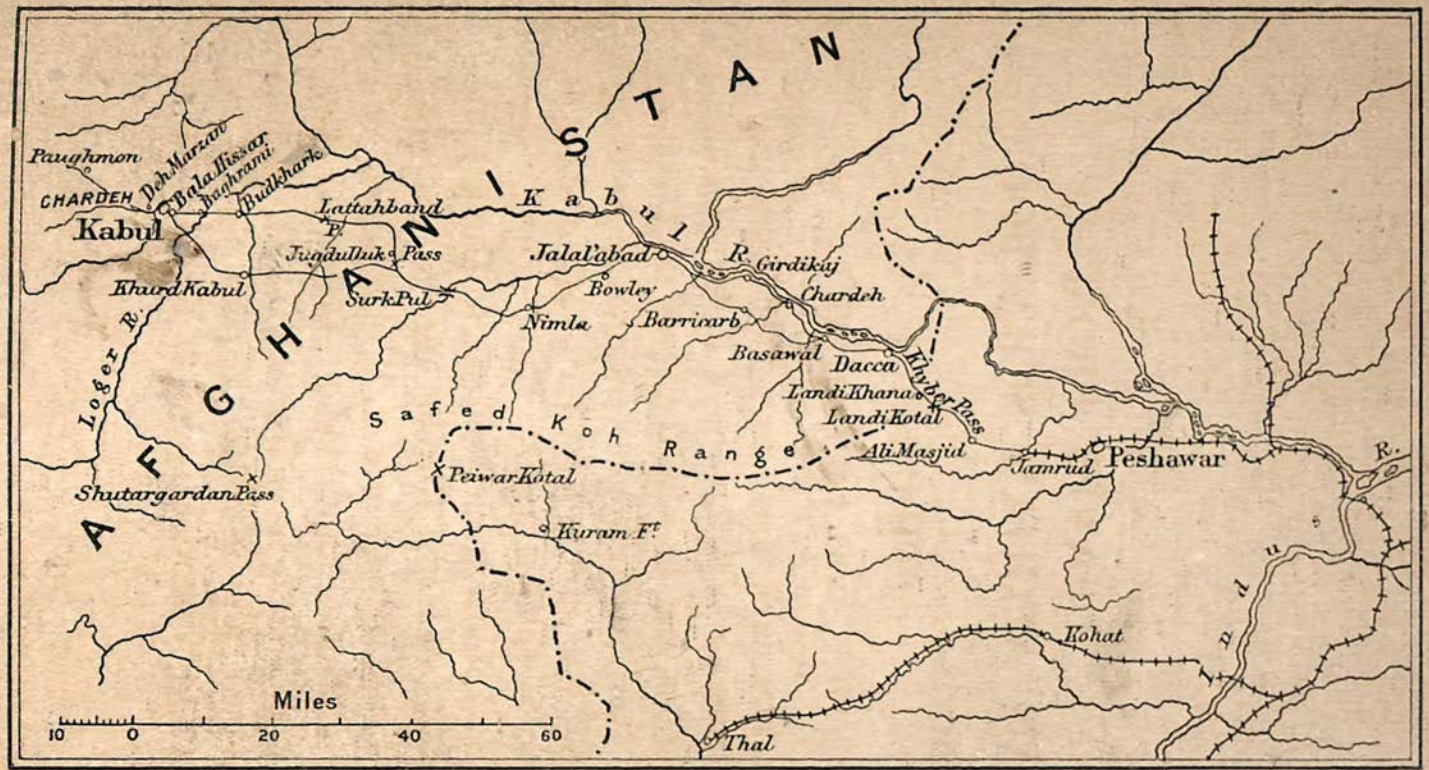
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LEAVES FROM AN AFGHAN SCRAPBOOK

CHAPTER I

INTO AFGHANISTAN

THE first day's march from Peshawar towards Afghanistan is to Jamrud, a distance of about ten miles, and here in the serai the travellers and their pack-animals assemble to be ready for leaving as soon as the Khyber Pass is opened in the morning.

The distance from Peshawar to Landi Kotal (central fort in the Khyber) can be covered in five hours, driving in a light cart drawn by a pair of ponies, these being changed at Fort Maud, halfway between Jamrud and Ali Musjid. Therefore it is usual for Englishmen in the Amir's service, when going to Kabūl, to send

on their servants with their luggage a day in advance, to join the caravan in Jamrud serai, and then set out themselves early next morning for the long drive up.

Pickets of Khyber Rifles always guard the road whilst caravans wind through the Pass, and here confusion is avoided by the traffic being regulated so that the up-going caravan meets that coming down at Ali Musjid.

For an hour or so the white road lies very level over the plain, and soon crosses the last bit of railway one sees on leaving civilization.

Out from Peshawar and its beautiful whispering trees we go—out from Peshawar and its *minahs* (starlings), tracing the road right off the plain till the lines of feathery trees by its sides have ceased, and at last it begins to rise and coil in and out amongst hills, writhing along its way like some endless monster clinging to the rocks!

Upon coming up with the caravan there is a great deal of shouting and fuss to get it put aside in masses whilst we drive by, and until the whole cavalcade be passed we move in a

series of jerks, a few yards at a time. Should an elephant happen to be marching, our ponies must be blindfolded and led, whilst we ourselves walk past him.

When we are through, and clear road is again reached, off our two ponies set once more, travelling at a remarkable speed, considering what a pull it is for them.

But Gul Mahomet knows their sores, and uses his stump of a whip-handle with much precision, one prod meaning "Go on," two prods "Gallop," three prods being administered rapidly into one spot for "Hold back"!

Our road dips down where a stream crosses it, and for a few seconds the willing beasts' feet are cool as they take us jolting through with a swish and a rush to get up some of the coming hard rise before them with the impetus gained in the descent.

Up and up goes our road, fold upon fold, till Peshawar fades away in a haze, and the world is left behind.

Still the dusty serpent seems endless before us, and hot rocks, with their dried bushes of

pale green, go gliding past, waltzing behind us into distance, beckoning and bowing as they recede, and sometimes appearing to come back tantalizingly towards us as we wind away and away.

Here and there we catch glimpses of men guarding the road, perched on inaccessible-looking rocks above us. Sometimes we pass a little blockhouse. Very rarely a bird appears.

At last we reach a few Zakka Khel villages, and not long afterwards a sudden turn brings the mud walls of Landi Kotal Fort into sight. A very steep bit of road finishes the long rise up to it.

After camping here for a night, we take to the Afghan horses and a *tachta-a-wan* (palanquin), for it is impossible to drive any further. On this second march we soon reach Afghan territory, when the Khyber Rifles hand us over to guards sent from Kabul to conduct us for the rest of the way. One sturdy Englishman who entered Afghan Government service declared that he would like to write on the rock at this place, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

SECOND DAY IN THE KHYBER.

Nearing Afghan territory.

To face p. 4.

When Dakka is reached we are conducted through the caravanserai up into rooms overlooking the Kabul River and one of the finest mountain views in our journey. In comes a tray of sweets, dried fruits, and pomegranates from the Serhang's wife, whilst the Serhang (governor) himself appears, smiling, to bid us "Welcome back to Afghanistan."

After sending a present to the lady, and watching Akbar arrange his stoves to cook our dinner, we get some tea, and take a walk round the verandah-roofs to look down at a weird sight. Recruited from all parts of the country, a crowd of men and animals are getting ready for night. The Khyber Pass is open for down-coming caravans on Thursdays and Mondays, and they are assembling for two or three days before, so that when the up-going caravan gets in, every inch of Dakka serai is occupied.

From the far north comes the Afghan Turcoman, bent on a pilgrimage to Mecca, taking, perhaps, one or two of his women with him. The poor creatures have to take it in

turns to ride on a donkey whilst their lord and master swaggers along on a gaily-decorated horse.

There are donkeys whose loads of sultanas and hand-made carpets are too heavy for them, but these creatures seem to fare the best. Their owners see that they have a full meal, and generally manage to pick the easiest spot in the serai for them to sleep in.

Camels in strings of six or eight, fastened together by a long cord run through their nostrils, come sauntering in, and are made to sink on their knees whilst the drivers slide big cases of merchandise off their backs. After being watered, these lanky beasts are arranged like the spokes of a wheel, and lie down, when their driver throws a bag of chopped straw in their midst, and leaves them till the following morning.

The camel-driver is about the hardest man I have ever met. He tramps the country from end to end in all sorts of weather. In the depth of winter I have seen him sleeping out in the snow, sheltered in the lee of his animals.

He carries a good thick stick, and is generally accompanied by a huge Turcoman sheep-dog, something like a cross between the mastiff and St. Bernard.

These dogs are very savage, and are prone to attack anyone who goes near. There are many small traders with a pack-horse or two, or, maybe, a few shod bullocks, who are only too thankful to attach themselves to some large caravan for safety.

A gentle grinding sound begins, of creatures munching busily; packs are stored beneath the verandahs, where their owners will sleep by them; men make their bread in bowls on the ground, as little fires begin to glow all about the dusky serai, and smoke comes curling up.

The small village does a rare trade in groceries, such as flour, sugar, and green tea, and as the head of the Customs is the principal shopkeeper, all must buy from him if they wish to get through quickly.

A few at a time, the men have all been to perform their ablutions in a brook outside, and soon an old *moolah* (priest) wails out

the call to prayer from the roof of his *musjid* close by.

After prayers, the serai doors are closed, and food is taken. Pipes go round, and then we are all ready to settle down for the night, except our guard on the doors, and the serai cats, which then commence their nightly hunt for food.

Very early next morning a disgusting bubbling noise awakes us. It is camels complaining as their packs are put on again.

We dress quickly, pack up, and after breakfasting, begin another march, this time to Basoul.

The remaining stages are: Girdikaj, Jelal'abad, Bowley, Nimla, Surkh Pul, Jugdulluk, Baricab, Samoocha, Budkhak, Kabul—that is, given fair weather and fodder supplies.

In March one year we were rainbound in Jelal'abad for two days, and once or twice had to make forced marches to find food or a roof that would keep us dry at night.

Samoocha was a mass of mud, and smelt of horses which had broken their legs and died by the roadside, so we missed that place out, but

lost a *yabboo* (pack-horse) getting through it. He had in his pack our sewing-machine and good friend Martha, who at that time was only a puppy. Fortunately she was unhurt by the fall, and lived to come back to India four years later.

CHAPTER II

AFGHAN CHARACTER

In such a country as Afghanistan, shut away as it is from the world by chains of mountains, and strewn with stony deserts, one would scarcely expect to find a tenderly nurtured people; and as its women are kept in complete obscurity behind the purdah, and regarded as creatures existing for man's pleasure alone, one doesn't look for nobility of character and goodness somehow, because one likes to think these things are the result of home influence.

Home life in a Mahomedan land is nothing like that which we English hold so dear. Many, many years hence, when education—now in its infancy in Kabul—creeps out to other cities and becomes potent, conditions of life in Afghanistan may improve.

Naturally the *moolahs*, and Sirdar Nasarullah,

who are fanatics, hate Amir Habibullah's new educational scheme very bitterly, since by its working enlightenment must gradually spread, and rob them of their power over the people.

Amir Habibullah has a great desire to see young men of Kabul taught other things besides the Koran, although he enforces the teaching of that sacred book before all else. "First learn the Koran," he has said, "and keeping one foot firmly planted upon it, with your other foot stray where you will. Knowing the Koran, you may learn what else you choose."

The Memon Khana, or guest-house of Kabul, was in autumn, 1906, transformed into the "Habibiya" College for boys. A square building, the glare of its white walls being relieved by green and red paint on its woodwork, it stands in a garden enclosed by high mud walls, around which classrooms are built. In a part of this college an art school is conducted by Gul Mahomet, a clever young Turcoman; and mathematics, English, geography, and calisthenics are taught by a staff of qualified men from Lahore University.

Although the people of Afghanistan, as a whole, are uneducated, not more than 2 or 3 per cent. of them being able to read or write, they are amongst the cleverest in intrigue and subterfuge, and can play with unruffled patience a long, slow game of waiting.

Even when some prominent official out in the country is known to have been systematically robbing the Government for years, as well as the poor wretches under him, he is, as a rule, not punished summarily, but may be promoted to greater office, and, after enjoying it for a year or so, be called to Kabul. Expecting to receive fresh honours from his Amir Sahib, he cheerfully goes to Court, and upon his arrival is tried and punished for his crimes, the nature of his sentence depending upon the Amir's whim at that moment.

Supposing a Government workman wants a holiday to attend a party in honour of some small relation's circumcision or a wedding, he, perhaps, dare not ask for it, or knows there is little likelihood of its being granted. Therefore he comes with a mournful face to

work at the usual hour, saying his mother is very ill.

A little later on a child will come running to the works to tell him that the mother is dead. The man then asks to be allowed to go and bury her, and as interment must be done promptly in the East, he, of course, gets permission, and hurries away to the wedding or circumcision feast, as the case may be.

An official sent a pathetic letter to my husband one day, begging that the services of a bricklayer from the Government tannery might be given him for a day or two, as he was very anxious to repair the dwelling of an aged and good woman-servant, who was a widow.

It was very inconvenient to spare a bricklayer just then, but he went and worked several days. Afterwards I discovered that he had been employed at the official's own serai, helping to build a set of apartments for a fresh wife that gentleman had taken!

Last year, it having been reported at Court that a number of rifles had been stolen from the Government stores, Nazir Safir Khan (head

of secret police and seal-bearer to the Amir) was informed that he must either recover them or else pay for them out of his own pocket.

Although Nazir had his suspicions as to the whereabouts of the rifles, he said nothing, but set off from Kabul along with his son and some servants, giving an impression that he was going down to Jelal'abad, a six days' journey, to see about some of his property there.

After reaching camp the first night, he secretly left it, his son remaining in charge. Accompanied by one servant only, Nazir then rode hard and fast back to the opposite side of Kabul city. There he dyed his grey beard, procured the loan of some camels from a friend, and dressed his servant and himself in the rough clothes of their drivers.

By the next evening these two men, slouching along by their borrowed animals, arrived at a village where Nazir suspected the rifles were concealed. There, over the camp fire, when prayers and food were finished, and a friendly pipe was being handed round, he let it leak out

that he had a great longing to procure a rifle to settle an outstanding blood-feud with a near relation, but that he, being but a poor camel-driver, could scarcely hope ever to have this wish gratified.

When the circle of sympathetic listeners dispersed for the night, Nazir and his servant lay down on mats beside their camels, ostensibly to sleep.

In the dead of the night a pack-horse got loose. When his owner caught him he led him to a fresh spot, and the iron spike of his tether was knocked into an old wall near the camels. Whilst so doing the man succeeded in attracting Nazir's attention and letting him know that he had a rifle for sale in a house close by. At dawn Nazir went to the man's little shop for a piece of cord, and was shown a rifle.

Handling it caressingly, the crafty old seal-bearer spied a Government stamp upon it, and, after a talk, gave it back with cleverly feigned reluctance to the shopkeeper.

"I cannot buy it now," said he, "but my hands are aching for it. I will try to-day to

sell one of my camels, and also send my companion to a friend in Kabul, who may perhaps lend me a little money, and, God willing, I will return for it soon."

Then Nazir's servant went with a message to Kabul, and soon came back, bringing, not money, but a body of mounted police. These surrounded the village, killed the shopkeeper, and, after a long search, unearthed all the missing rifles, with which Nazir was able to return triumphantly to Kabul, thanking God for a good kismet.

During the border troubles of the summer of 1908, when hundreds of men were quietly deserting from different towns and villages, and passing down through Kabul on their way to help fight against the *feringhi*, Amir Habibullah's powerful brother, Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, was cognizant of the movement, although the Amir himself did not realize what was taking place until matters grew very serious.

A rebel leader went to Sirdar Nasarullah, and gave signs that he had important things to say. Sirdar Nasarullah found excuses for sending

AMIR HABIBULLAH KHAN AND SIRDAR NASARULLAH KHAN

At three years of age. Aged two.

With their nurses, amusers, and handkerchief-carriers.

To face p. 16.

away most of the people present, but still his visitor was dissatisfied. The rest were made to retire excepting Nazir Safir Khan. Then the rebel leader whispered his tale, begging Sirdar Nasarullah to sign an order upon the Government arsenal for a quantity of rifles and ammunition to be issued to his followers. The Sirdar, who is ever kindly disposed towards any movement directed against the hated "unbeliever," said, "I cannot do this thing, but"—looking nonchalantly at the seal-bearer—"Nazir has the seal, and he is a good Mussulman."

To cut this story short, the rebels were soon in possession of 5,000 rifles and half a million rounds of ammunition from Kabul arsenal. Some days later a report of the matter came to His Majesty's ears. He suspended Nazir Safir Khan from office, and for a time did not allow him to leave the *arrk* (palace), but, beyond keeping him in suspense there, did not punish him any further then.

Upon the Friday following, after attending service at Alam Gange Musjid, His Majesty

came out and stood upon a bridge which spans Kabul River there.

The concourse of worshippers waited excitedly, yet silently. Something evidently was about to happen. All traffic at the busy cross-roads came to a standstill, and in the hush that was indeed felt Habibullah Khan raised his voice, making a passionate speech. In the course of it he cried, "Bring me a Koran." One was quickly fetched from the *musjid*. Opening it, he continued: "Now show me chapter and verse where your book bids you to go and fight against friends. These British are friendly towards my country, and I towards them. I am your Lamp of Faith and Nation, and without my command you may not make war against another people. If, after this, any one of you shall dare to preach *jehad* again, I will tear out his tongue, and if I catch one more man on his way to the fighting, I will cut off his feet. I, your Lamp of Faith and Nation, have spoken."

Not a word was uttered by the crowd as it melted from the bridge, away up the four roads,

whilst Habibullah Khan drove back to his palace.

With one accord Kabul people appeared to forget about *jehad*, for none dared speak of it. Two reckless *moolahs*, however, who came into the city next day to preach it, were seized, and suffered there and then the terrible punishment decreed by their ruler.

Nazir Safir Khan was blown from the gun in 1909, as he was in the plot to poison the Amir and Sirdars Inyatullah and Nasarullah.

CHAPTER III

THE KABUL TANNERY

My first experience of tanning and currying in Afghanistan dates from 1892. It was in that year Mr. Tasker and I were engaged to erect and start a tannery and leather factory in Kabul for Amir Abdul Rahman Khan.

I shall never forget our first interview with that great ruler, whose shadow kept Afghanistan in order years after his death. It was summer, and we had to go to him in his palace at Paughmon, about sixteen miles from Kabul.

He was half sitting, half lying on a kind of low bedstead, dressed in a dark suit and astrakhan hat, with the royal diamond star upon it. Amir Abdul Rahman had been a martyr to gout for years, and towards the close of his reign conducted all his business like this, sur-

rounded by courtiers, whose costumes were made in a medley of styles.

Ever courteous to his English officials, he asked, "How have you enjoyed (!) your strange journey?" "Have you been properly treated by my officials in the different villages you passed through?" And last, but not least, "Have any of your goods been lost or stolen on the march?"

Fortunately, before our presentation, we had been coached up by the interpreter in answers suitable to give to such questions as these if the Amir should ask them. So we hastened to assure him that we had been carefully looked after by the officer in charge of our journey-guard, that all our boxes had arrived safely, and also that his Afghan officials had treated us with kindness and consideration.

We were now invited to drink green tea. It was weak, full of sugar, and served in glass tumblers. As soon as we had emptied our glasses they were quickly refilled by the attendant who stood behind our chairs.

After a fourth helping we had had about

enough of this new beverage, and allowed our glasses to remain full. The Amir saw this. "Is not my tea good?" he asked. "Certainly—very good." "Well, then, drink some more, and this time try a little mulberry syrup in it."

Then a fresh brew of tea was made. Some sticky stuff was put into the glasses along with it, and again we had to drink. I tried to retain hold of my glass to prevent its being recharged, but no, our friend of the teapot behind intended to carry out his orders to supply us with tea, and he did. It was not until we had taken some twelve or fourteen glassfuls that we received permission to leave the durbar.

As the palace at Paughmon is sixteen miles or so away from Kabul, we spent the night there. Tents and food were provided, and an officer in whose care we were placed showed us every attention.

The following day Amir Abdul Rahman again sent for us, and asked in a joking way, "How did you like your tea-drinking yesterday?" It seemed he had seen our discomfort, and knowing we should find out afterwards that by using the

magic word "*Bus*" (It is enough) we could have stopped the tea supply, enjoyed his joke very much.

Business was the order of the day, however, and Amir Abdul Rahman soon gave us instructions what to do in Kabul. "Go down to my old native tannery, and see what you can make use of there. If nothing can be made of it, then, just plan out a tannery and leather factory as you think proper, and return to me in a week's time to let me know what you require in the way of men and materials to build them, when I will order the work to be done with all speed." We returned to Kabul, and paid a visit to his old tannery.

Leather works in any country are not renowned for their sweet odours, and before entering the gates of Amir Abdul Rahman's tannery we knew that this place, at any rate, fully maintained the reputation of the trade. Of all dirty places we had ever seen it was the worst, and we decided to erect new works. So a week later we appeared before the Amir with an estimate and plans for his approval.

These were soon explained, for Amir Abdul Rahman quickly understood what we wanted to do. Calling up a *mirza* (clerk), he ordered him to write out orders for bricklayers, joiners, and building materials. After signing and sealing the firmans, the Amir said, "Now, if you have not obtained everything in a week's time, according to what is written in my firman, let me know at once."

We did not experience much difficulty, and soon got things going, with one exception: the head-carpenter would not supply enough timber. Following out our instructions, at the week-end we reported the matter.

To our horror, he was sent for to Paughmon, beaten almost to a jelly, and what was left of him cast into gaol. After this first experience of reporting, we were loth to furnish the Amir with any further names; but when there was any delay in deliveries of materials, a threat to report the matter soon produced a good effect.

Mr. Tasker was an excellent fellow to work with, and the buildings were soon erected. Then our troubles began. Every official who

could, tried his best to prevent our progress, and in such a way that we could not actually prove who had caused the obstruction. Sometimes lime would be thrown into pits containing hides that were nearly tanned, to spoil the leather and earn the Englishman a bad name; but we managed to get through, and in time were able to show samples of leather, tanned and curried English fashion, in Kabul. No machinery was supplied, and all the work had to be done by hand.

Towards the end of 1893 our position became unbearable, in consequence of interfering officials who tried their best to cause trouble amongst the workmen, and interpreters translating falsely. All sorts and conditions of men used to come and look round the works, tampering with the men and stealing leather, and caused trouble in many ways. So we gave orders to the guard at the entrance that no one should be allowed to enter unless on Government business.

One day, when I was busy making dubbin, I was surprised to see a man gorgeous in a red plush coat strolling through the works. Calling

him to me, I asked him what his business was, and he said in a lofty kind of way: "Oh, I am just looking round to see if you are doing your work." This annoyed me very much, and I told him to get out of the works sharp. He smiled, and said he would go when he was ready, after he had seen the remainder of the works.

It was useless to mince words with a man of that kind. I promptly seized him by his neck, and ran him out in the true chucker-out style, my greasy hands and arms making a fearful mess of his gold-braided plush coat.

I did not think much further about it, but just after we had finished our dinner that night a soldier came to the bungalow with an order from the Amir commanding my presence at once. So off I went, absolutely in the dark as to what business was afloat. I was soon ushered into the Amir's durbar hall, and lo and behold, there stood my friend of the plush coat in a fresh uniform, with the greasy garment laid on the floor before him!

The Amir asked him to relate his account of the morning's disturbance, and he did not half

lie about it. When he had finished his story, the Amir turned to me, and said: "Now, what have you to say about it?" I told him how we were pestered daily by these fellows, how they prevented the men from getting on with their work, and that it would be impossible to make the tannery a success if they were not stopped; also that as he, the Amir, was paying us our salary to teach his people, we did not care to accept his money if we were unable to earn it.

This reply seemed to satisfy His Majesty. He turned on the owner of the plush coat, and cursed him bitterly, finally ordering him to be thrashed, and fining him 500 rupees for taking up his time over nothing.

Even after this man had been punished the annoyances continued, so at last we decided to resign our positions. As the head-interpreter refused to translate or present our letter, we went to the British Agent (a native gentleman from India), who kindly translated and handed it himself to Amir Abdul Rahman.

Mr. Tasker's resignation was accepted, but mine was not. The Amir said: "There are

two men for the leather work. The big one can go" (Tasker stood a good 6 feet, and weighed about 13 stone 4 pounds); "the little one" (myself) "must stop." Anyhow, Tasker was allowed to go, and I was detained.

As the mission under Sir Mortimer Durand was on its way up from Peshawar, I waited until its arrival, and laid the matter before him. He kindly explained the whole case to the Amir, who then allowed me to go. Thus ended my first experience in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER IV

FURTHER SERVICE, FROM 1903 TO 1909

One Saturday afternoon towards the close of the year 1902, when I was living in Leeds, I was surprised to receive a visit from an official of the Afghan Government, an Englishman, who had been ordered by the present Amir (Habibullah Khan) to try and find out the address of Mr. Thornton, a native of Leeds, who had worked for his father in 1892-1893, and to ask him if he would care to return to Kabul to take the management of the Government leather works there.

Amir Habibullah, when heir-apparent, had always shown me the greatest kindness during my previous stay in Kabul, and as the old gang of officials had passed away (through illness and other causes), I was willing to entertain his proposal. It was as follows:

"The Amir being a king, it would be *infra dig.* for him actually to ask you to return, but if you care to apply to him for the post, you would be accepted."

I gave the matter long and careful consideration, then acted on the suggestion, and, after some correspondence with the Afghan Government, decided to return and see what could be done. In the spring of 1903 I re-entered the service of the "God-granted Government of Afghanistan." My instructions said: "Spend about £70 on any English dyeing materials or extras that you will require, and we will supply you with *masala* (tanning materials) grown in this country, and the money you spend shall be paid you upon your arrival in Kabul."

What a sight met my eyes on entering the tannery which Tasker and I had spent our best efforts upon! The place did not appear to have been cleaned out since we left it in 1893, and after a thorough examination of the buildings, I drew out a report ready for the Amir. Upon reading it he sent for me, and said: "As

cholera is now raging in Kabul, perhaps you had better wait, and not try to begin working now." But upon being assured that there would be little likelihood of cholera spreading through the tannery being cleaned out, if only plenty of lime and disinfectants were used, the Amir agreed to my suggestion, and a few weeks afterwards the place was got into working order once more. Cholera had died away, and, a supply of labour being granted, I soon started tanning and currying again.

Something else started again as well, and that was the opposition from officials who had been farming the cost of running the leather works, and who now found out that the Englishman was only going to sign receipts for tanning materials, hides, and labour which he actually used.

At this stage my old experience became very useful, and slowly but surely the work was done. The Amir said: "When you have prepared a quantity of leathers ready for my inspection, send me word, and I will fix a day to look at them."

On Christmas Day, 1903, Frank Martin, the only other Englishman in the country, resigned office and returned to India, leaving me all alone. It was naturally an anxious time for many reasons, but, being keen about my work, the days soon slipped by. As the leathers neared completion I was extra careful, and one day found that some windows of the works had been forced, and damage done (fortunately not serious) to the samples.

There were three sentries on duty always, so I knew some high official was at the bottom of this mischief, and had squared them. Instead of reporting the matter to His Majesty, I slept at the works for a few nights, and was very thankful in the end to be able to show him a full range of leathers.

On Valentine's Day, 1904 (an auspicious date), with a good guard, I took all the leathers to the *arrk* (palace). They were spread out on tables in His Majesty's *gul khana* (conservatory), tickets being attached to each sample showing what it was suitable for.

The interview lasted from 1.30 p.m. until

close upon 6. First of all, the Amir cut a piece off every sample to see if it were tanned through, and, being satisfied on that point, proceeded to give the leather further tests by pulling and bending it. A number of slave-boys assisted in the exercise, and it was amusing when one of them remarked patronizingly: "It looks good, but I am afraid it will not wear well." The Amir, hearing this, said to him: "You seem to know a lot about it; now go and tan me some leather yourself, and I will compare it with this Englishman's." The page knew nothing about tanning, and did not have a very happy time during the next few months (so I was told on my return the following year).

Tea was served, and the Amir said to me: "I understand that you have a suggestion for extending the works. Is that so?" Producing my plans for the new factory, I showed them to the Amir, at the same time pointing out to him the advisability of his going in for a plant of modern English machinery, as tanning and currying by hand was not only difficult, but very slow, and I had little doubt that his work-

men would soon learn how to use machines, for the Afghan was an exceptionally smart man at "picking anything up."

This last compliment pleased His Majesty very much. The necessary documents were signed authorizing me to extend the works, arrange with his head bricklayer and carpenter to work during my absence, and then proceed to England to purchase the machines.

His Majesty expressed great pleasure at the success of the work, and presented me with a handsome backsheesh, besides increasing my salary.

The means of transport is limited to pack-animals, from Peshawar to Kabul; therefore the machines had to be made in sections, and, with few exceptions, these did not weigh more than 2 cwt. each. Where it would seriously have weakened a machine to cut it up, larger sections were cast, and these were conveyed on elephants, camels and mules carrying up the smaller boxes; but as I was limited to five elephants, arranging transport was a difficult task.

To simplify matters on their arrival, all the

machines before leaving England were painted different colours, and on their wooden cases stars were painted in corresponding colours. This made sorting them in Kabul an easy matter, for although the workmen could neither read nor speak English, they could understand colours, and place all the red stars in one heap, the yellow in another, and so on. The work of fitting the machines together was difficult. Afghans are none too careful when holding castings ready for being bolted together. My hands got badly knocked about, and we had a few narrow escapes before all the machines were erected and ready for running.

So far all went well, and no serious attempts were made at spoiling my work; but a new gang of officials had been appointed at the works, and before long I was made painfully aware of their presence.

In Kabul one's guards are ever present in the works, and are never supposed to leave their charges, wherever they go. This order was strictly enforced after Mr. Martin had been attacked by a man in the arsenal. Guards

were also on the works entrance day and night, but all this mattered little if the native officials wanted to spoil the work.

The poor soldier, who is half starved and badly paid, does not hesitate to accept a few rupees for turning his face the other way when required to. Two of our servants happened to be reliable men, and they acted as night-watchmen for several weeks previous to His Majesty's inspection in 1906. They were fully armed, and had orders not to hesitate to use their weapons if anyone ventured into the works during the night.

After His Majesty's inspection in 1906 (described in another part of the book), I was again sent home, to purchase a second plant of machines for the leather works, also machines for a boot factory capable of turning out 400 pairs of army boots per day. There were 1,200 cases in all, and a new engine and boiler. The latter were dragged up to Kabul by four elephants on a specially constructed carriage. When all the machinery reached the Pomona Serai, Peshawar, it was detained by the *mirza*

AFGHANS AT WORK.

IN THE AMIR'S NEW BOOT FACTORY, KABUL.

To face p. 36.

(clerk) in charge, and I spent weeks trying to get it forwarded to Kabul, using bribes and threats, and at last sent a report to the Amir.*

An English assistant accompanied me this time to run the boot factory; but he only stayed six months in Afghanistan, so that the work became very heavy, as I was left single-handed.

During the summer following, the Amir again visited the works to inspect his latest additions to them. It was a most eventful day for me. His Majesty asked: "How long would it take to make a pair of army boots?" I said (to be on the safe side): "About an hour and a half, Your Majesty." "Very good," said the Amir. "I will mark certain pieces of leather, and you can make them into boots whilst I time you. When I was in India I saw a pair of boots made in fifty minutes."

His Majesty thereupon retired to his tent for prayers and the midday meal. During his absence, selecting my men, I told them of the Amir's intentions. On reappearing, he gave

* A year later the *mirza* was called to Kabul to "give in his accounts."

me the leather, saying, "Begin!" and made a careful note of the time. Forty-eight minutes fifty-four seconds later the completed boots were handed to him, and His Majesty was delighted that his own subjects were able to work so well. He ordered a leather label to be made, and inscribed as follows in Persian:

"These army boots were made in my presence in the month of Jamada I., 1326.

"(Signed) LAMP OF FAITH AND NATION."

Turning to me, he said: "These boots must be placed in a nice cupboard with a glass front, so that all may see what can be done in my new army boot factory."

His Majesty promised to increase the pay of all the workmen, and sanctioned a further extension of the boot factory, telling me that I should go home in a few months' time to purchase more machinery. By September I was about worn out with extra work and worry, having often to put in seven days of it per week, and was thankful to start off on the journey home in October, 1908.

CHAPTER V

OFFICIALS AND SERVANTS

WHEN going to Kabul, my wife and I always took enough clothing, besides tinned provisions, medicines, and countless Western comforts, to last two years; then there was no danger of being stranded up there without such things. Consequently, a good deal of shopping and packing had to be done in England, and again in India, where there is a last chance of buying anything which may have been forgotten at home.

It is never safe to trust the *kafilah* to bring boxes of goods up from Peshawar to Kabul. Sometimes they get dropped in mid-stream, or crushed, and may be stolen outright. Even should a package get through safely, exorbitant duty and backsheesh, in addition to illegal *yabboo* hire, will be exacted from the English-

man by sundry officials before it is handed over to him.

Several years ago a "Foreigners' Office" was originated in Kabul by Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, to spy upon and generally harass English people in the Government service there. A gentleman from this department meets them at Peshawar, ostensibly to procure comforts and food for them on their journey, but in reality to rob them systematically. Knowing this, the Englishman still has to give the man backsheesh when Kabul is reached, and is obliged to present handsome gifts to the chief members of the Foreigners' Office as well if he intends his work to prosper.

When a return journey is about to be made to Peshawar, all these officials, along with a host of others, will look for backsheesh again, and the sooner it is given the better for the Englishman.

It rests with certain members of the Foreigners' Office to procure his *rahdari* (passport), and get that, as well as firmans for guard, pack-animals, fodder, tents, and food, signed by

His Majesty or Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, and unless backsheesh be liberal, the Englishman will generally be kept waiting some months for those papers.

Whenever my wife and I expected leave to return home, we began, months before it came, to pack, as each box had to be made out of several others, which had already done the journey once, and become rather badly battered. Then there was a great sorting of clothes and stores, some being retained for travelling, and the rest divided amongst the servants.

One Friday, after a distribution, Jelal, the groom, came upstairs to the dining-room with a message. Looking round suddenly, I had some difficulty in keeping a straight face, for there, framed in the doorway, stood worthy Jelal dressed for *musjid*, in his clean white turban, some curly-toed, golden shoes, and a suit of my pale blue pyjamas, which he proudly imagined looked very English!

When, later on in the day, our water-carrier —a fellow who stands well over six feet high— appeared in a lady's elaborately embroidered

undergarment, which had been given him in a bundle of things for his mother, we were quite unable to refrain from laughing aloud, although Mahomet fortunately never found out what amused us.

My orderly, another lanky giant, tried to wear a pair of my boots, which were eights, and much too small for his erstwhile unconfined feet. Determined, however, to make them stretch, he kept the boots on, and slept in them for a few nights!

There is no difficulty in obtaining servants in Kabul. They know the English, although "unbelievers," are honest, and will pay them good wages in full at the proper time, whereas a Kabuli employer would only give them half as much, and that when he felt inclined.

As a rule, when once a servant has worked for an Englishman, he likes to come back into service again and again when the Englishman returns to Kabul after leave, and will even take a journey down to Peshawar to make sure of his berth.

CHAPTER VI

IN KABUL CITY

EXCEPTING parts of palaces, a few of its whitened *musjids* (churches), and the beautiful building enclosing the late Amir Abdul Rahman's tomb, which is illuminated with red and white in imitation of brick-work, Kabul is entirely a mud city.

Seen from the house-top, it presents an impressive picture in khaki, a little relief to this sombre colouring being supplied by tops of trees peeping above the high walls of its serais, or perhaps a bright-coloured purdah hanging before some window to shield the ladies within from observation.

The population of Kabul has only been roughly estimated, by some people 150,000, by others 300,000; the exact number is scarcely likely ever to be known.

A few years ago, when an attempt was made to count the populace, a panic ensued, for all the men, fearing that their names were required in connection with some crime or other of which they were guilty, fled, or hid themselves in divers strange ways. Thus the idea of taking the census had to be abandoned.

Kabul can only well be seen from a height, for, being a purely Mahomedan city, most of its flat roofs have high walls surrounding them. The more money a Mahomedan has, the more walls he puts up, because money to him means wives, and as he does not trust those wives, he has no alternative but to wall them in completely.

The ladies, however, reap one advantage from this: they can enjoy fresh air and sunshine upon the house-tops without fearing the dishonour of being observed by men-folk, or causing any man disgrace through having looked into the eyes of another's wife.

Kabul's best houses are built in quadrangles, each having only one entrance through its high surrounding walls. The massive doors are well

watched by servants, and, where high-born ladies live, are guarded by armed men and an inner guard, consisting of old retainers often bordering upon second childhood.

Within such a serai one finds four suites of apartments with windows facing the centre of the enclosure, or court, which is usually made into a garden, where birds become very tame, and pets wander at will. A pavement runs around the garden, from which broad steps lead up to each separate suite of rooms.

Those opposite to the doors are generally used for reception and dining, whilst on the left wall one finds the series of peculiarly-domed chambers of the *hummam*, or Turkish bath, and also a sitting-room for final cooling down and rest after dressing.

Along by the doorway are quarters for the serving-women, and the remaining side of the square is completed by those rooms occupied by the husband when visiting the wife who lives here.

Of course, it is only wealthy men who can afford such a separate harem-serai for each wife,

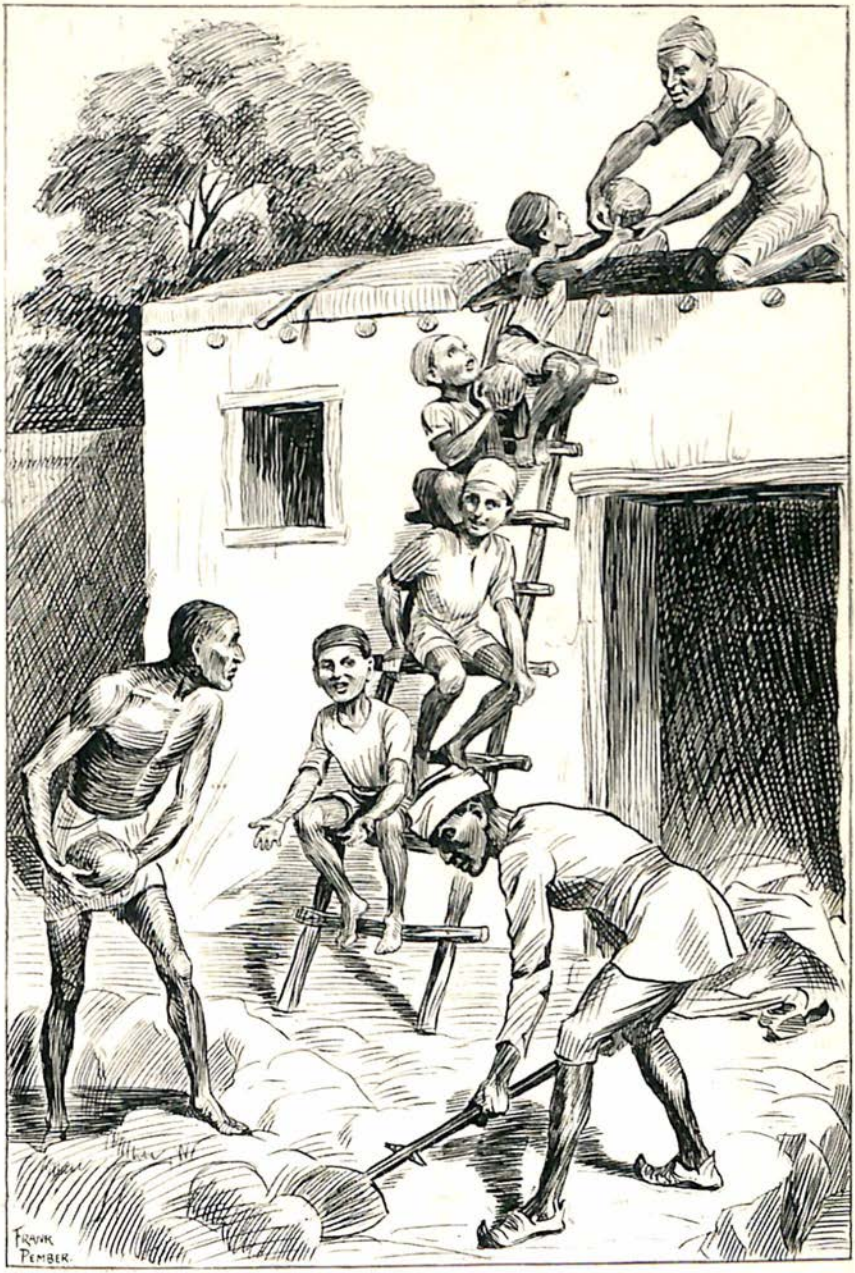
and those who may be considered a kind of middle class are quite content if they can provide a single suite of rooms for each of their partners.

Where a man in humbler position, though not exactly poor, cannot do even this, he still has several wives, and finds his hands as well as his house very full. There is much jealousy and heart-burning should he unwisely give one a present slightly more valuable than another's, or show too much appreciation for one lady's charms.

The method of constructing ordinary houses is as follows. Many poles are firmly fixed into the ground, and on these a complete wooden skeleton of walls, doorways, ceilings, and roof-screens is formed. The wall interstices are then filled up with sun-baked mud bricks.

Upon the poles, placed as rafters, long rush-mats are spread, and over them about 6 inches of mud is smoothly laid, forming a roof, into which sundry bits of hollowed wood are fixed by way of rain-spouts.

The walls, both inside and out, are now care-



COOLIES MAKING A MUD ROOF.

To face p. 46.

fully plastered down, chopped straw being added to the mud just as hair is used by any English bricklayer.

A rudely carved window-frame, holding five sliding shutters, in which are two or three panes of precious glass from *pian* ("down below" = India), is inserted in the upper story. In summer these shutters are pushed up into a rack and left there, making a home for long-legged, dreamy, golden wasps. These creatures fill in all the spaces with combs, fragments of which come littering down into the tenant's eyes when he once more closes his shutters at the fall of the year.

Afghan doors are crudely made in two divisions, or flaps, which are fastened by being cautiously brought together and hooked to a staple in the door-frame above by a piece of chain. Metal hinges are rare, but spikes of wood, left jutting out of the doors at their inner corners top and bottom, are stuck into holes, and act as swivels.

Paint is only used for Government work.

In walls of all dwelling-rooms mud shelves

are made. One runs around three sides of the room about 7 feet from the floor, like a massive frieze, and beneath it is a series of arched recesses, forming many smaller shelves, about 30 inches long by 5 wide. In houses where native whitewash is used over ornate plaster designs, the effect of these shelves is very charming, and would, I think, please the fancy of an English architect in search of decorative novelty.

Afghans make their whitewash by grinding up a bluish stone found in the hills and mixing it with water and glue. This preparation is dabbed on the walls by means of lumps of wool or rags, and dries quickly with a beautiful glazed surface.

I once took out English whitewashing brushes, and showed some workmen how to use them. The more they tried the worse the mess became. Looking dreadfully bored, they continued working with the brushes till my back was turned, and then quickly exchanged them for their lumps of rag.

Ceilings are made of white calico. Many

strips of it are stitched together till the sheet is of the required size. This is held by a number of men, whilst one stands on somebody's shoulders and tacks it up all round to the top of the walls, covering up the unsightly poles and mats overhead.

In summer an Afghan family requires but little furniture in the sitting-rooms. Curtains, carpets or mats, a few cushions, and one or two miniature tables will be all one finds there. Bedrooms at this time of year have still less furniture, for as the roof has now become a dormitory, nothing remains in them but a few mats. During winter a *sandoli* is arranged in the main room of each house that can afford one. Let me describe it.

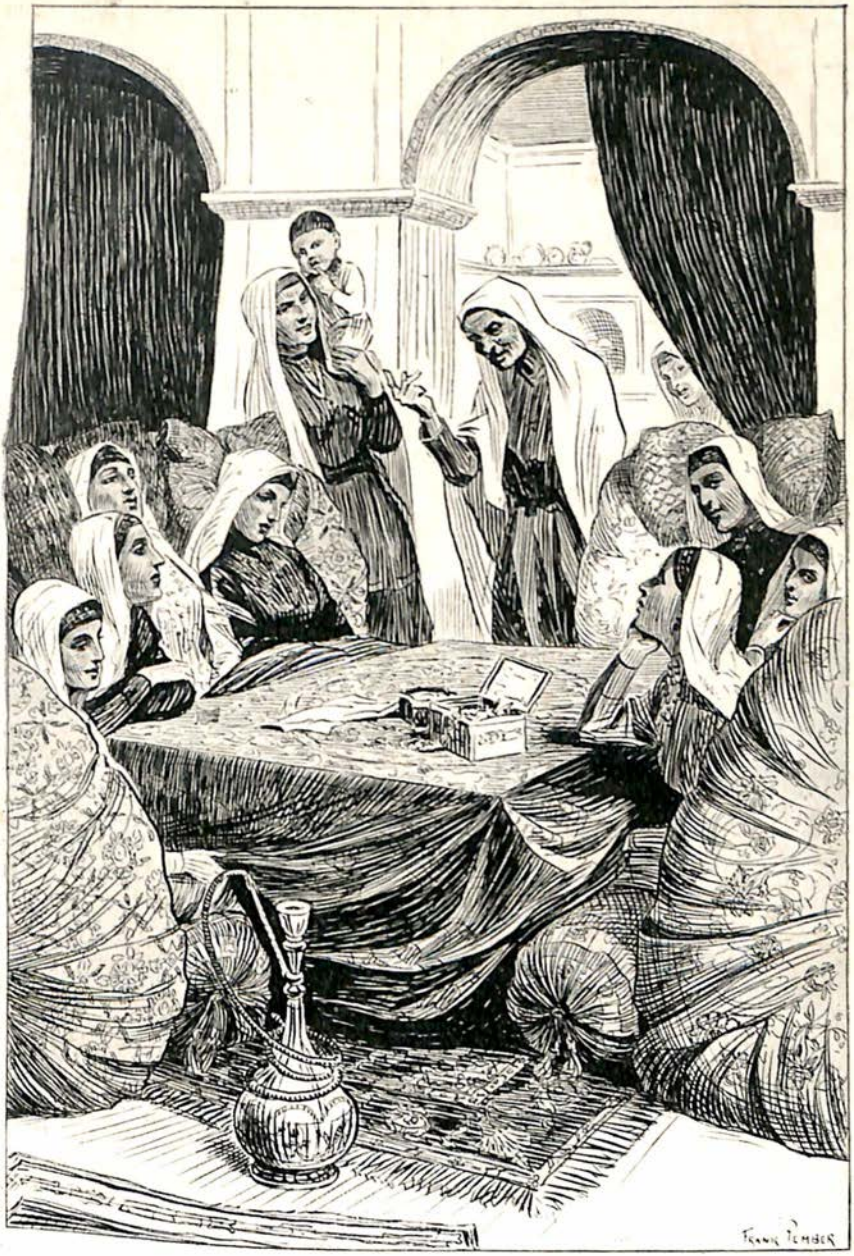
A short-legged table is placed in the centre of the floor, and beneath it a brazier of clear, hot charcoal covered with wood ashes. Over the table an old quilt is cast, upon which one of rich material is superposed. Long, giant bolsters are stacked at a convenient distance on all sides of the table, looking as if some quaint game of castles were about to be played. Then

members of the household and any visitors step gently within the wall of bolsters, sit down, lean back upon it, and, pushing their legs with much caution well under the table, draw the edges of the quilt neatly up to their elbows.

Having nothing of greater importance to do, it is customary for ladies to spend most of their time in cold weather tucked warmly in a *sandoli*, chatting or doing fancy-work, whilst slave-girls sing or some old crone tells tales.

The masses live practically without comforts, for they are extremely poor according to Western notions. Their dwellings are only lighted by holes in the wall, bedsteads and cooking utensils constituting their all of this world's goods. The income of families whose breadwinners are soldiers or labourers ranges from twelve to twenty rupees per month, paid irregularly (a rupee = ninepence). This will scarcely provide a family with the simplest necessities, and it cannot be wondered at if these people steal whenever an opportunity occurs.

The sum of thirty-five rupees a month puts



A "SANDOLI."

To face p. 50.

a man in a position of comparative affluence. Only by exercising the most rigid economies and occasionally stealing do many families eke out an existence, but in spite of this I never once saw a starved baby. The Afghans, however depraved they may seem in many things, never, so far as I can see, neglect their little children, and under the age of eight years a child does not begin to feel the pangs of hunger. His clothing may be of the scantiest, but his brown body is plump, and in summer-time he is a merry little urchin.

Sometimes it is difficult to resist a desire to laugh at the funnily-dressed folks passing along the roads. Like Joseph's, their coats are of many colours, and so, too, are their other garments, often being patched till the original vesture cannot be detected at all. A considerable trade in old English uniforms of all descriptions is done in Kabul city, which are bought and mixed up in the most grotesque fashion with native garments.

Imagine a very tall man in white turban, half a suit of some cavalry regiment, a long police-

man's coat, with his native white shirt peeping out behind as he walks, and a very seedy-looking cartridge-belt to serve in place of buttons (which have all been sold long ago for food), and you have the soldier who clears the way for me by flourishing his ramrod when I go out for my walk. Then picture, if you will, another ragamuffin, who brings up the rear and helps to keep Judy, the bull-pup, in order. He is wearing an old coat that once adorned a Cockney, for it yet bears upon its collar the words "Empire Theatre." His voluminous bloomers, this coat, an ancient rifle and a bandolier, make quite a striking "get-up." He is also the proud possessor of a pair of boots, but these are never laced, as he so frequently has to wash for prayers.

Cheerfully the barefooted rascal in front pushes the donkeys on one side, aims a stone at the pariah dogs occasionally by way of amusement, or, should any young man dare to disobey his order, "Khobbadah!" and not "mind" quickly enough, he will send the offender sprawling among the soft dust. To

old men he shouts, "O white beard, stand aside!" To a woman stumbling along in her *burkah*, his greeting will be, "O mother of dogs, get out of the way!"

I meet during the walk plenty of poor souls who have nothing like such sumptuous garments as those of my guards, and see the small children collecting cowdung in baskets, which they carry poised on their heads. This they take home, where it will be made up into flat cakes, which their mothers will stick along the house walls or upon the roof to dry for winter fuel.

Donkeys, laden with huge bundles of dried weeds for the same purpose, are always to be seen coming into the city, and all scraps of driftwood down by the river are greedily seized.

Not long ago coal was discovered about ten days' distance from Kabul, and specimens were brought to the Amir. There was considerable excitement in his gun factory over testing them, but unfortunately they did not prove to be serviceable, and as the cost of getting and

bringing the coal on pack-animals to Kabul would have been prohibitive, nothing further was done in the matter.

For some years after Amir Abdul Rahman died scarcely any trees were planted by the Government, so that at the present time wood is very scarce and expensive.

In the summer of 1908 two fine poplar avenues in Kabul were felled for Government use, and many other trees were blazed. Habibullah Khan then issued an order that whenever one was felled, three must be planted.

One day a poor man came up to be tried for breaking a bough off a Government tree by the road, near to the leather-works. He was asked why he did it.

"Sahib," said he, "I had no wood to bake my bread with." His Majesty was not satisfied with the excuse. "Take away this man," was the command, "to the very tree he broke, and hang him up to it by his hands to-day. To-morrow hang him by his feet, and so on for five days. Then bring him back to me."

Fortunately the man did not live to return

for further torture. The police were given orders to fire at anyone they caught breaking trees, and a decree went forth that all pack-animals entering or leaving Kabul should be muzzled, to prevent them nibbling at the green branches along the wayside.

CHAPTER VII

DIFFICULTIES OF KABULI LIFE

THE Englishman in Kabul has daily to encounter and parry as best he can attempts of native officials to delay and even wreck his work.

Being perfectly ignorant of the outer world's modern methods themselves, these men bitterly resent the introduction of them into their country by the "unbeliever," and always set their wits to work to prevent an Englishman succeeding there. Often they will spend money in the attempt to get him the *bud nom* (bad name) so dreaded by Afghans.

His lot is verily a peculiar one. The Amir without any warning calls upon him to perform various services, apart from the work he was originally engaged for.

One afternoon in January, 1907, I was summoned to the Salaam Khana i Khaz to examine a pianola, and was informed that it was presented to the Amir by the British Government during his tour in India.

It had been carried up to Kabul on a kind of large stretcher by men, and although considerably shaken up by the fourteen days of jolting, the instrument reflected great credit upon its makers, for after a little trouble and several somewhat exciting days, it began to work properly. On the third day, in driving past the Salaam Khana i Khaz, Habibullah Khan caught the strains of a Sousa march, and evidently liked it.

The following night, as I was about to leave the leather factory after a hard day's work, a messenger rode in to say, "Amir Sahib wants you at once." I of course had to drive to the *arrk* as quickly as possible—instead of home to dinner and a good fire.

His Majesty, having collected together an audience of princes, fathers-in-law, uncles, and heads of departments to keep him company,

desired an evening's entertainment with his pianola.

Hungry and tired as I was, I set to work, and played for nearly three hours through selections from "The Gondoliers" and "Geisha," Sousa marches, and other cheerful music, which astonished and delighted the listeners. Music of a more serious nature did not please them, for they said, "It is very good by our eyes, but it causes our bones to melt."

After the music, conversation started. The Amir, giving me a cigarette, asked, "You are cold?" "Yes, Your Majesty, for I came without an extra coat." A page-boy was called. "Go to the stores," said the Amir, "and bring a fur coat—a good one."

Snuff was then handed round. "Do you take snuff in England?" inquired the Amir. "No, Your Majesty. In olden times a great deal was used there, but now it is seldom taken. My old grandfather took snuff often to keep him awake."

As the Amir was in high good-humour that night, I ventured to ask a favour. A boiler

belonging to the engine for driving the new boot factory in Kabul did not arrive till six months after the lighter machinery and engine, so that there was a likelihood of the factory remaining idle until the snows melted and it could be brought from Basawal (a village two days from Landi Kotal), where it was stuck in a ditch.

Knowing of two powerful traction-engines in Kabul, kept for moving heavy guns there, if needed, I suggested that His Majesty could save any loss of time if he would kindly lend me one of them temporarily for the boot factory.

"Very good," said he; "but if I lend you one of my big engines, and you use it to drive many machines, when you have finished with it, my engine will be like your old grandfather, who required a lot of snuff to keep him awake!" However, he lent me a portable engine, which had originally been used at a generating-station for electric light in the *arrk*. A long-sleeved coat arrived, and I was allowed to make my salaams and go home.

Arrangements for removing the engine from the *arrk* gardens had to be made without delay, lest Habibullah Khan might alter his mind about lending it; so next morning it was tested, and a part of the shed over it pulled away.

But although I had obtained royal permission to take away this engine, officials still did their best to put obstacles in my way. For instance, I applied to the *pheelwan-bashee* (head man in charge of the elephants' stables) for two elephants to draw it. He said: "I shall be pleased to let them come when my superior officer the Colonel has consented," and wrote to that gentleman, who replied: "By my eyes, they shall come if my General will permit them to!" So the Colonel wrote to the General, whose answer was: "I am quite willing for two elephants to do this work, but must first get a signed order from the Naibe Saltanat" (Sirdar Nasarullah).

Eventually a signed order was obtained from the Naibe Saltanat, which slowly made its way down the official ladder till it reached me. I handed it to the *pheelwan-bashee*. "Yes," he

said thoughtfully, after reading it; "here is a signed order for two elephants, but it does not mention their chains. I shall require another order for them." Realizing that I must act independently of my opponents, I replied ironically: "Oh, I quite understand, and know I may rely upon you to obtain the necessary order for harness!"

Going straight into the leather works, I collected 150 men and all the odd ropes on the premises, and with these went to the *arrk*. Here tackle was improvised, and the men were harnessed to the engine. With continuous cries to Allah and much struggling, it was moved from its old position, at last got out on to the road, and dragged down to the factory, a distance of a mile and a half.

Meanwhile a report of this matter was conveyed into the *arrk*, and there was great danger of His Majesty hearing it; so a commotion began down in the elephant stables, where some animals were hastily harnessed and sent into the leather works.

Just as my men had planted the engine safely

inside the works, in stalked two great elephants with their chains, preceded by the *pheelwan-bashee*, who was greeted with a storm of jeers from my men, the vilest abuse being heaped upon him and all his female relations back for four generations.

CHAPTER VIII

SIRDAR OMAR JAN'S WEDDING

THE present ruler used to hold a Parliament at his *arrk* till as lately as 1904; but that year it was dissolved, and has never reassembled.

Habibullah is the Government.

It may not be generally known that a Mahomedan's first son, whether by his favourite wife or any other, or even a slave-girl, is his heir. This rule is strictly adhered to. But in Kabul there are many factions, each one having its would-be future Amir.

Sirdar Inyatullah Khan is Amir Habibullah's eldest son, but not by his favourite wife, who happens to have a bright and better educated boy of thirteen herself. Now, the Amir's brother, Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, is very friendly with this favourite wife of the Amir, and when that lady was mourning the loss of a

daughter two years ago, hastened to offer his condolence, and showed much sympathy with the bereaved mother, Habibullah Khan being down at Jelal'abad at the time.

Then, of course, Sirdar Mahomet Omar Jan, son of Amir Abdul Rahman's favourite wife, is always an anxiety to the "Government." His mother, Bibi Halima, is a remarkably able woman, much beloved in Kabul. When Abdul Rahman lay dying, he is said to have exclaimed: "There is only one person who could well rule my country now. It is she." This lady, when Habibullah came into power, was for a long period kept a prisoner in her own serai, and even now is closely watched. Many kind promises made to her at Habibullah's accession not having been fulfilled, the Dowager-Queen naturally feels her position most keenly.

As Sirdar Mahomet Omar Jan last year reached the age of nineteen, his mother was permitted to make a great wedding festival in his honour. From the bridegroom's serai to Shararah the road was decorated with arches, flags, and thousands of lamps, and all Kabul's

SIRDAR MAHOMET OMAR JAN.

Son of Amir Abdul Rahman and his favourite wife Bibi Halima.

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brass bands, which are legion, seemed to be playing at once and incessantly for four long days.

According to Afghan custom, the bridal procession wound all about the city streets on three successive days, and was a strange and impressive sight. But this great display was turned to account by the Amir, to demonstrate his own power and Sirdar Mahomet Omar Jan's insignificance in Kabul. It started each day, when His Majesty was pleased to head it, seated in an open carriage, and escorted by a strong guard of cavalry. Along with him sat, not the bridegroom-elect, but Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, Sirdar Mahomet Ussaf Khan (father of the second Queen), and Sirdar Mahomet Asaf Khan, that gentleman's brother.

Next followed another open carriage, in which were seated Sirdar Inyatullah Khan, Sirdar Inadullah Khan (son of the favourite Queen), Sirdar Aminullah Khan (the Amir's half-brother), and the tiny eldest son of the bridegroom, who already has nine children by his slave-girls.

Behind all these prominent royalties came a

third carriage, containing the corpulent and intensely miserable-looking Sirdar Mahomet Omar Jan, reduced thus to a very unimposing position at his own wedding, in spite of his crimson coat being smothered with gold embroidery. He was accompanied by the head-bricklayer, the wood-store keeper, and the chief of police.

A dust-storm began to blow, and just as this interesting group came close to where my husband and I stood, Habibullah Khan's horses jibbed, and brought the procession to a stand-still. After fruitless efforts to make them move on, His Majesty insisted upon changing horses with Sirdar Inyatullah Khan, in carriage number two. When this was done, the procession, of course, followed the Amir.

Sirdar Inyatullah's companions had found seats elsewhere; but he had to take his father's carriage, and as the horses still refused to budge, got left behind. Laughing heartily, he borrowed an officer's horse, and galloped on to join his relations and hear many jokes cracked at his expense.

Other carriages and many strange vehicles passed, one coach, several tongas, and an old chariot among them—in fact, every horse in the Government stables at all broken to harness was used that day—and all the principal officials and notable thieves of Kabul passed in review between the crowds, the dwindling amount of paint upon their conveyances denoting their rank far better than did their apparel.

Mounted officers passed at intervals, keeping the procession in order, sometimes galloping from one part of it to another with messages. Behind the gentlemen all ladies of consequence, some from great distances around, were borne in *japons*, or Afghan palanquins, Queen Ulya Hazrat leading them, in a gorgeous one draped with gilt and scarlet cloth, attended by her body-guard.

The second Queen's *japon* was closely covered with curtains of blue and silver, and all four had mustered as many small pages and aged male attendants as possible. These clustered around them, some carrying sealed silver drinking-vessels of water or sherbet, and all on the alert

to steady their mistresses at difficult parts of the road.

After the four Queen's *japons* came dozens of others, heavily laden with visitors, their bearers staggering under the loads, for they had to carry them a long time, and by the third day had the skin worn away from their shoulders.

Four stately elephants marched in this part of the procession, bearing scarlet howdahs filled with a selection of Habibullah Khan's slave wives. Some of the *japons*, I was told, were broken down by the great weights within them, for there was keen competition among the ladies for seats, and fighting in some cases over getting in.

Upon the fourth night Sirdar Mahomet Omar Jan's two brides were carried in similar style into their new home amid a grand finale of fireworks and bands playing, and left there, to see for the first time their husband's face, and make friends with his nine babies.

ELEPHANTS CARRYING ROYAL LUGGAGE.

AT SIRDAR OMAR JAN'S WEDDING PROCESSION.

The Amir's slave-wives' contingent.

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CHAPTER IX

HABIBULLAH AND SOME OF HIS WIVES

Amir Habibullah Khan is passionately fond of flowers, and spends much of his time gardening, State business often having to wait for days if he should happen to be doing anything so serious as labelling plants or building a summer-house.

His physicians, military and civil secretaries, sons, pages, and interpreters, must all help fetch and carry heavy flower-pots, or build, as the case may be, much to their disgust, for it wrecks their Court clothes, and as they always have to wear English-cut suits, costs them dearly.

It is well known that Habibullah Khan has strong leanings towards English fashions, and sometimes has an expert tailor brought up from India to Kabul or Jelal'abad to replenish the royal wardrobe.

After such a revision His Majesty spends days in sorting up his discarded suits, hosiery, *topees*, and gloves, etc., into lots. When at last they are all ready, he will call up one of his page-boys, and pointing to a lot, say, "You may have those for thirty rupees, and you"—beckoning to another luckless one—"may take these for eight rupees."

The young fellows have no alternative, and therefore pay, and remove their bundles without murmuring as the Amir proceeds with his sale. One day the Government fur-keeper came into Court and told the Amir that many thousands of astrakhan skins were lying in the stores, and not improving there. Habibullah Khan pondered a few moments, then remarked loudly, "All my subjects who love me will wear black astrakhan hats!"

Nobody was allowed inside the *arrk* next day without a black hat, and officials were kept busy chasing away any who dared to appear in turbans. By night every scrap of astrakhan was sold.

Upon returning to Kabul in 1907 after the

THE PRESENT AMIR OF AFGHANISTAN.

As a young man, when a full report of everything he had done during the day was heard by his father each evening.

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business trip to England, my husband was requested to allow me to teach Queen Ulya Janab sundry subjects, and lessons were accordingly arranged to be held at her serai three mornings a week.

Especial interest was created by this clever lady's first attempts at drawing, painting, paperwork, and gardening. Her relatives were proud to think she was the very first woman of Afghanistan to learn such things.

I soon found that Ulya Janab was a hard worker, and that she used her lessons as a weapon to fight her rival, Ulya Hazrat, for favour in the Amir's eyes. For hours together she would strive at them, taking a few minutes off occasionally for prayers, and returning to work, and if only the august husband arrived whilst it was in progress, she was delighted.

One morning Habibullah Khan walked in as the finishing touches were being put to a landscape, and began to criticize. To our astonishment, he said in English, "You please mix me some colour of cloud." I did so, and handed it to him. Taking a brush, he said,

"Tank you. I will now put in some clouds," and forthwith proceeded to make a mess at one end of our sky, at the same time smearing off a tree with his fur cuff.

Handing brush and palette to Ulya Janab, who had taken such pains with her picture, and now was striving to smile, though she saw it being ruined, he continued (in Persian), "Now, you see my clouds at this end?" "Yes"—meekly. "Then put some like them at your end of the canvas."

When this was done Habibullah Khan was petted by his wife, who cleaned his cuff with some turpentine, and bade him adieu as he went out to begin the day's work at Court. "Amir Sahib is a very good man!" she said loyally when he was gone.

"*To esteemed Mrs. Thornton.*

"Be it known

"You can kindly come for a visit at 2 p.m. to-day, and I wish you to be in good respect.

"(Signed) ULYA JANAB."

So ran a letter which a page-boy brought me one day. Putting on my prettiest dress, at the appointed time I drove away to the *arrk* gates, then made my way on foot into Ulya Janab's serai, wondering what *tamasha* my royal pupil could be giving. The serai was very quiet.

In her *salaam khana* (drawing-room) *nashta* had recently been served, for Ulya Janab and a strange lady were seated with the Queen's chief women around a white cloth on the carpet, upon which sundry dishes were arranged.

Pillau (a mixture of rice, chicken, and spices) was the principal viand, and there were also basins of mutton fricasseed along with wild rhubarb and carrots. Of these the ladies partook silently, blending and eating them with their fingers, while pussy walked about and ate up any pieces of meat thrown on the cloth for her. I was given an arm-chair and asked to take *nashta*, but excused myself by saying I had only just had a meal.

The company went shares with one tumbler for water, but when Ulya Janab required a drink, a slave came forward, handing a gold-lidded

glass upon a silk handkerchief. I saw that water for Her Royal Highness was always brought from a vessel kept padlocked in a corner of the room, one slave being responsible for it.

As soon as *nashta* was over, girls brought in washing-vessels, and cleansed any hands held out to them, whilst two women cleared away all traces of food from the floor, and pussy licked her paws. Then I discovered why I had been sent for.

"This," said Ulya Janab, smiling, and introducing the strange lady with large eyes, "is a very noble wife of Amir Sahib's." It was the one who has had no children, and is therefore not favoured with much of the Amir's company.

We chatted about different things, and soon the "very noble" one said, tapping the carpet with her fingers, "Why not come and sit down here with us?" So I did, and found the visitor was interested in my clothes. Feeling my dress with finger and thumb, she asked, "Was this expensive? How much did you give for it?"

After a while she inquired whether I found the floor hard; then, taking my hand in her

own and gently pushing back the lace cuff, said to Ulya Janab, "There, look! You see that's white!" She turned to me sadly, asking, "What soap do you wash your face with to make it white? Mine is always yellow, whatever I do to it!"

"Your complexion is indeed very good," I replied, "and people of different lands are a little different in colour." But still she was troubled. "God makes only good things, as you know," said I. "Yes, all His work is good," she agreed. "And as God made both brown and white complexions, both must be good." "Yes," she said resignedly, "it is so," and at last gave up the subject, much to my relief.

Green tea was served in cups of thin china, with lids and without handles. Then some chocolates which I had previously given to Ulya Janab were opened and handed round. The "very noble wife" had never seen such sweets before, and after enjoying a cream, came upon a hard one. "Take this out," she said, handing it to a slave, and when I left she was going on with creams.

Great jealousy exists between Ulya Hazrat and Ulya Janab. Both live in the *arrk*, and vie with each other in providing amusements and attractions to entice Habibullah Khan into their serais.

Queen Ulya Hazrat, his prime favourite, is a typical Afghan woman, of splendid physique and features, and has large dreamy eyes. Her beauty and ten children are her only attractions, but many slave-girls as well as eight slave wives live in her serai, which contains about 300 souls.

Queen Ulya Janab, who lost her only child a few years ago, depends for allurements now entirely upon personal charms and accomplishments.

Vivacious, petite, but of striking personality withal, this lady makes a most interesting pupil and a gracious hostess, always on the lookout for something to learn or anything fresh in the way of dress. Unlike Ulya Hazrat, Ulya Janab wears English clothes. Many a time when I got back to the bungalow after lessons a little note would come, asking for the hat or

frock I had worn, till all my pretty things were borrowed except those I had hidden for the journey home.

But the Queen was very kind, and would sometimes ask me to meet her six brothers at dinner, when together they gave me beautiful presents. And when the snows were so deep that it was impossible to drive in the *tum-tum*, her blue-and-silver *japon* was sent to fetch me to lessons.

Among many luxuries ordered by the Amir when my husband and I came to England shopping for him in 1906 was a fine collection of Carters' seeds and bulbs. Besides those of flowers, vegetables, and certain fruits, seeds of the most useful kinds of trees and farm products were included, and the growing of many of them added a new sensation to the Amir's list of amusements.

Coming into Ulya Janab's *salaam khana* one winter's morning during her lessons, he talked for over an hour about them, and asked me to write full instructions upon all the packets and boxes in the presence of an interpreter, who was

to translate my writing, and not the printed instructions, into Persian, for gardeners to learn in the *arrk* grounds and other places. Finally His Majesty said: "If you please, grow samples of all the flowers and vegetables in your own garden, for if some fail in mine they may succeed in yours, and if in your garden some should fail, in mine that kind may grow. Thus I shall see or taste of all."

When the officials got wind of this, it was difficult to fence with them. They came like a flock of hungry birds, all expecting to dip into the Government seeds, and often told me how fond they were of flowers. After giving them lots of tea, I got rid of them generally by remarking that doubtless, when spring came, the beds of young plants would require thinning out, but it was too early to lend me flower-pots yet, as they suggested.

Ulya Janab determined to plant her serai with sweet-scented English flowers, and asked me to lay out a number of beds in her square ready for them, and then teach her to garden.

The Queen decided of what shapes her flower-

beds should be, and I arranged and measured them out on the native concrete. When all was ready for the workmen to start operations, Ulya Janab sent her pages running to fetch them, and then fled within along with all her women, who made fast their doors and windows, drawing the curtains closely. Soon the serai doors were open, and gardeners, door-keepers, coolies, and donkeys laden with soil came trooping in. These were kept busy that day removing the patches of concrete and tipping soil into its place. A few days afterwards, Ulya Janab sowed her seeds and set to work to learn all their names, so that she might use them in conversation with the Amir, who always wants to know the correct name for everything.

His Majesty entrusted an old farmer with the growing of the new cereals and roots, and this man was much interested in some oats—things he had never seen before, and could not understand. So my husband told him they were good for horses, and made them brisk. Very pleased—for all Afghans love horses—the old fellow went away and grew the oats with

great care. Coming back in autumn with samples of his own producing, he said: "I have grown the oat. You spoke truly. I gave some to my oxen, and even they became swift, and ran madly away, dragging the plough behind them!"

Tulips, crocuses, and the crown imperial lily grow wild in Afghanistan, but daffodils had never been seen in Kabul till the spring of 1908, and they especially charmed the Court. If His Majesty gathered one and presented it to a favoured follower, it was worn proudly almost as an order.

Our house in "Indarabi" was situated about a ten-minutes walk from the *arrk*, and often did some poor wretch come panting into our garden bearing a flower-pot accompanied by a letter. A new flower had opened and been spied by Habibullah Khan, who at once dictated the letter, and ordered a gardener to go quickly and ask if the plant were correctly named and all about it once more. One day a specimen arrived with a letter running thus:

"*To Sincere Mr. Thornton.*

"Be it known,

"We saw in Herat, during our recent tour there, a plant resembling this one, of the turnip kind, which was eaten there. May we eat this?" . . .

Our reply was disappointing:

"Please inform His Majesty that this yellow bloom is of a perennial sunflower, which is not good for food."

Another day this came:

"He is God.

"5 *Shaban*, 1326.

"SINCERE MRS. THORNTON,

"We send for you herewith fifteen melons of the best kind out of our own melon-field.

"(Signed) LAMP OF FAITH AND NATION."

We were told this was a great compliment.

The beautiful district of Paughmon, some sixteen miles distant from Kabul, is far cooler than the capital in the hottest months, and for his summer holiday the Amir generally goes there, taking a few wives and a great many oil-stoves, cooking being one of his favourite pastimes.

It happened that the first English tomatoes ripened in our garden during his absence there. We packed them in cotton-wool, sealed the box up elaborately, and sent a groom to Paughmon on horseback with it. Jelal reached Paughmon safely, and delivered his parcel to the Amir, who unpacked the tomatoes. A confab was held as to what had better be done with them, seeing that up to that date Kabulis had always eaten their native tomato green. One of the courtiers suggested "eefry," so, as that was distinctly English, His Majesty ordered the "eefrying pan." Immediately one was produced, and the Amir cooked them himself, thus seeing that they were done properly for the Government to eat.

When the little black cherries ripened in

Kabul I made a quantity of them into jelly, and, finding it had a rich flavour, took a sealed pot of it for Ulya Janab to taste. Her Royal Highness put it aside, however, till her lord and master visited her, then brought out the new sweetmeat. "Name of God!" said he, upon tasting it, "that flavour is good," and continued eating with great relish.

Next day, during lessons, a small page-boy came in from the gardens with a note from His Majesty for Ulya Janab. It was to ask if other Kabuli fruits, such as grapes, melons, or apricots, could be converted into jellies.

The Queen's lesson came to a standstill, for she was kept busy most of that morning sending my replies to a succession of queries which the Amir kept writing as he sat in his summer-house, for he took the matter most seriously. At length I was requested to experiment with different fruits from the Government gardens of Kabul and other places, and teach the Amir's cook how to make jams and jellies, "so that we may always have them with us," ran the last letter.

Mahomet Ibrihim, head-cook, came to Indarabi on the following day, leading a small procession of satellites bearing sugar-loaves, fruit, charcoal, *deghshies* (pans), bottles, and round stoves, and worked for six weeks there.

As each kind of preserve was ready for putting into bottles, it had to be tasted by Ibrihim and several witnesses. After asking them, "Is it good?" and receiving a reply in the affirmative, I filled the bottles, sealing each one of them with wax. One day Ibrihim caused quite a stir at Court by presenting his collection of new preserves and pickles. Habibullah Khan looked at them, and commenced tasting each kind in turn, whilst Ibrihim stood by, answering a running fire of questions, and rescued his royal master from taking a big mouthful of red cabbage-pickle, or chutney.

After the tasting was over, Habibullah Khan resealed those bottles he had opened, and locking the whole lot up in a private cupboard, popped the key into his own pocket with a chuckle.

When some English herbs began to grow

nicely in the *arrk* gardens, a number of them being brought before His Majesty aroused hopes of still further epicurean excitement, and off they were sent to Indarabi with a letter, asking, "May we eat these raw or boiled?"

Upon being informed that sage (which he had sampled raw) was used in stuffing ducks, parsley in making forcemeat for different dishes, and so forth, the Amir was mystified, and sent a request that Ibrihim should learn how to use them all. This was no joke. It meant cooking his dinners at our bungalow, and dishing them up in English style. Every process had to be watched the whole time to see that no one tampered with the food in any way.

A large room was converted into a cooking school, furnished with oil oven, all necessary utensils, and silver chafing-dishes from the *arrk*. Very funny it was sometimes to see Ibrihim saying his prayers amongst them, devoutly facing Mecca, yet keeping watch out of the corner of his eye upon the oven door the while.

At an appointed time each night two stalwart

bearers appeared—"Gog and Magog" we called them—carrying upon their heads trays enveloped in leather covers with strong padlocks. My husband and I then summoned our servants, tasted the food in their presence, and saw Ibrihim and his assistants eat some of each kind too.

When arranged, the dishes were placed upon the round trays, and the leather covers drawn to and locked. After this my husband sealed the key up in a packet, which was put in an envelope and again sealed, four times, ready to be handed to His Majesty.

This solemn ceremony was performed each evening, and the Amir, who had a habit of dining very late, began to watch for his English food, gradually taking it earlier, until his dinner-hour was moved to 9.30.

My husband said to Ibrihim one day, "Supposing Amir Sahib were to be ill after eating this English food cooked at my house, instead of his usual *pillau*, what would happen?" "Sahib, he would kill me," calmly responded Ibrihim.

The first dinner included three roast ducks, and was taken at midnight in Ulya Hazrat's serai. After it the Amir said to Ibrihim, "Three are not sufficient. Another time bring me six birds of such a size, and learn all the lady will show you." At eleven o'clock next night, His Majesty sat down to a dinner of—

Tomato soup.
Roast veal.
Mashed English potatoes.
Boiled celery with white sauce.
Melon charlotte.
Whipped cream.

Upon carving the joint and finding stuffing inside it, he sent a page-boy to anxious Ibrihim (who was waiting outside the gates) to ask, "What meat is this?" and received the answer, "Sahib, it is calf." Out went his page again to inquire, "But what part of a calf?"

Ibrihim, fearing his royal master was angry now, tremblingly sent in his reply, "Sahib, it is its leg." Hearing this, His Majesty burst out laughing. "Well," said he, "if this be the

leg of a calf, where, in the name of God, are the bones?" One little menu included

Cock-a-Leekie soup.
Boiled fowls dressed with tomatoes of two colours and eggs.
Green peas.
Salsify in white sauce.
Treacle pudding, etc.

And I believe that treacle pudding appealed more to Habibullah Khan's palate than anything else Ibrihim was taught to make. After trying it, he called for a plate, then, putting a small helping of pudding upon it, commanded an orderly to convey it quickly to Sirdar Mahomet Suliman Khan, his brother-in-law, out in the city.

The poor brother-in-law was fast asleep in bed, after a long and very trying day at Court, but they woke him up to eat the treacle pudding. He agreed, of course, with His Majesty next day that "By the beard of the Prophet, 'poodeeng' is delicious."

I told Ibrihim on Saturday not to come the next day to a lesson, but to make his master

THE SUMMER PALACE AT HINDEKKI.

A few miles from Kabul.

To face p. 88.

some *pillau* at the *arrk*, as I should rest on Sunday. "Mem-sahib," said he in dismay, "what can I tell Amir Sahib? He will be angry with me!" "Tell him simply that the mem-sahib does not work on Sunday because it is English *Roze-i-Jumah*" (Friday).

So Ibrihim went with his tale to the Amir, who fortunately made a joke of it. "Does the mem-sahib go without dinner on Sunday? If she does not eat, then I will not." When Sunday came His Majesty said to Ibrihim, "Tell the mem-sahib she is making me dreadfully hungry to-day."

The following letter arrived some days later:

"He is God."

"KABUL,
"13 *Shaban*, 1326.

"*To sincere Mrs. Thornton.*

"Be it known,

"You have been sending to me some good, delicious dishes of your own cooking lately. I am very pleased by this act of yours. But now I wish to inform you that yesterday I had

taken medicine on account of cold, which is still on me, and for which I am kept on strict invalid's diet. While I cannot eat the food you send, it is a trouble to you. So I wish you not to send me any dishes of your cooking for five nights, after which again, if it is no trouble to you, you may continue sending dishes as before.

"(Signed) LAMP OF FAITH AND NATION."

In a private interview the Amir explained to my husband, "I eat very lot! Too much I eat!" Not long afterwards cholera, more feared in Kabul than even smallpox, which preceded it, broke out in different parts of the city.

Members of the royal family, with one accord, secluded themselves in their serais, whilst Habibullah Khan, most timorous of them all, thought to exclude the disease by surrounding himself with an extra ring of bayonets and closing all entrances to his *arrk*, shutting out the world and work alike. But, in spite of his precautions the dreaded disease invaded Ulya Hazrat's serai, and carried off a messenger and several slave girls.

CHAPTER X

"JOOBA"

"JOOBA" is a *tamasha*, or fête, held at Chardeh, about three miles from Kabul, on three Fridays preceding March 21, to celebrate the melting of the snows.

Only those who have lived amongst Afghans can realize what the advent of warm weather means to them.

Let me describe an ordinary poor man's dress. On his head he wears a *coolah*, or pointed cap, around which, if he be not too poor, is wrapped a turban, one end of which is allowed to hang down on his shoulder, and serves in turn as pocket-handkerchief, purse, or dust veil. Then comes a calico shirt over bloomers of like material. A coat and curly-toed shoes complete his costume, which is distinctly airy for a

place where the thermometer often registers 30 degrees of frost.

It is a mystery how he can live without socks, and go cheerfully down several times a day to wash his feet in an icy stream before prayers, yet he never fails to do so. Those who can afford it wear *postheens*, which are long-sleeved coats of sheep-skin, with the wool turned inwards, the yellow skin being needleworked with natural silk at its borders.

Poor women, whom I can only describe as pictures of misery in winter, have merely cotton bloomers, slippers, and a cotton tunic. Out of doors they are closely veiled up—obliterated, in fact—in a cotton cover, which consists of bloomers and *burkáh*. The latter garment resembles a voluminous skirt, closely gathered in at the top and sewed on to a cap.

In front of an Afghan woman's eyes is fixed a linen "*rui-band*," which has in it a few tiny squares of drawn threadwork, and what she sees through these is all she knows of the world outside her home.

As the cutting wind sweeps along, a mother

A LITTLE KABULI GIRL WHO, HAVING REACHED THE AGE OF TWELVE, MUST NOW "TAKE THE 'BURKAH.'"

To face p. 92.

may be seen grabbing at the folds of her *burkah* as it blows out balloon-like about her, trying to shelter herself and her baby with it from the blast as well as from man's gaze.

It can easily be seen that days of *jooba* are welcomed by all, for although women do not take part in any pleasures out of doors, even they have the great satisfaction of knowing that afterwards they will at least be warm.

As early as six in the morning straggling processions start from villages miles around towards Chardeh, and the road from Kabul itself looks, from our roof, like a river of human beings flowing westwards. ...

Here and there ambles a horse or donkey with as many men upon his back as it will hold. Rich and poor, all jumbled together, go by. Princes and their suites, gaily dressed small sons with their proud fathers, beggars, stall-holders carrying their kit, fakirs, blind men, prisoners in chains—all are off to keep *jooba!*

By midday the road near Chardeh is aswarm with beggars craving for *pisah* in God's name, and fakirs reciting tales loudly; whilst toy-sellers

do a brisk trade in wooden tigers, snakes, fighting rams, monkeys, and paper windmills. On moves the crowd in the warm sunshine, till, just through Deh Marzan, it reaches a noted priest's grave.

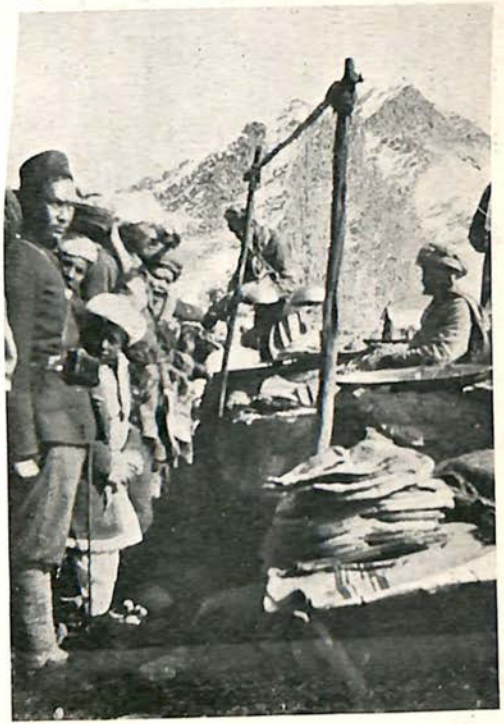
Here two long lines of *sofas* are built of stones, and however many people arrive to spend the day, there is no fear of food supplies running short, for a certain number of shopkeepers in Kabul have orders at each *jooba* to close their premises, and take all their goods out to Chardeh *sofas*.

There we see the confectioner sitting among mounds of dried grapes, rock, and sugared almonds. Near him is a man selling *kabobs*, whose stall gives out a most unholy scent. *Kabobs* are scraps of meat boiled in oil, which go a long way. When a fresh batch of them is ready, their vendor rings his bells loudly and shouts their virtues, whilst his neighbour, a baker, is kept busy selling flat cakes of bread and salt.

There is a sprinkling of iced sherbet stalls, where stewed apricots may also be bought.

AT THE "JOOBA."

Showing Sirdars' tents with guards on each side, and the tight-rope.



"KABOB" AND BREAD STALLS ON THE "SOFA" (STONE PLATFORM).

To face p. 94.

Two pice (5 pice = 1d.) is the price charged for a sherbet or four pieces of apricot. A strong smell of fried river-fish comes to meet us from afar as we struggle with our camera among the seething mass of men-folk, giving a rupee here and there to fakirs to keep them in a good temper.

Chardeh Valley lies between barren mountains, and lends itself excellently to making a huge playground, being fairly level. Placed on a slope well back from the crowd is a tent with a *chamianah* and strong bodyguard for Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, who is acting as M.C. to-day, as His Majesty the Amir is still away at Jelal'abad.

Close by is another tent for his sons and the *Moinasaltanat* (Sirdar Inyatullah Khan). In an open space before them are a tight-rope and trapeze, fixed some fifty feet above the ground, and the man who always comes at each *jooba* to perform upon them is so self-possessed as to require no net beneath him.

On reaching a tiny platform at one end of the rope he calmly kneels and says his prayers

above a sea of admiring eyes, and far from being unnerved by a roar of "Allahs" which arises, quite enjoys being literally looked up to as a good and wonderful Mussulman.

Further up the valley exhibitions of galloping are in progress, some riders having come as much as three days' distance to join in them, simply from a love of self-glorification, for no prizes are given.

It is exciting to watch an Afghan tent-pegging, or see him come whirling up the course, gun in hand, towards a hat placed upon the ground. Nearing it, down slides the gay rider, slipping his left stirrup, and clinging along his horse's flank with left arm and leg.

Crack! goes his rifle, and there is another hole in the hat. He never misses. Quickly passing the rifle beneath his horse's neck from right hand to left, he recovers his seat, and rides back to repeat the trick.

No ropes or fences are used to keep a clear course, but a few soldiers push back any over-anxious spectators with their rifles, or throw stones at unruly ones. Our guards have much

difficulty in piloting us from place to place, because of the tribe of followers pressing at our heels, some of whom have never heard English before or seen an unbeliever; others hope to be taken in a photograph.

Seeing a boy dressed in nothing but an old sack and hat, we turn our camera quickly upon him. Evidently he expects to be shot, and tries his best to back into the crowd, but their firm hands hold him.

"Istadasho!" (Stand still) they yell; "sahib is going to give you a rupee!" greatly enjoying their joke at his expense. In fear and trembling our subject poses, and looks amazed when he gets a rupee, so, too, do the crowding faces.

We are glad enough to make our way toward the *tum-tum*, and drive back into Kabul, for a couple of hours in an Afghan crowd on a warm spring day is quite enough.

CHAPTER XI

JELAL'ABAD

At the first sign of snow Amir Habibullah makes preparations for his departure to Jelal'-abad, where he spends the winter, and takes with him the Court, his principal wife (etc.), and a large body of troops. It is in this city that the old palace of Amir Abdul Rahman stands, with its whitewashed exterior and beautifully decorated ceilings of old oil-tins painted by native artists.

Its furniture is somewhat mixed, consisting of lovely, carved-walnut suites and cane-bottomed chairs. The walls are hung with pictures cut from almanacs, and common oleographs.

But it is the carpet in the Durbar Hall which takes one's eye—a large hand-made carpet, which feels more like silk than wool, and covers the whole floor from end to end;

and, on closer examination, variations in its design show that more than one generation has assisted in its making.

A spacious garden surrounds this palace, and has a central irrigation canal. Two small ponds about 4 to 5 feet deep are stocked with goldfish, which afford amusement for the page-boys. There are walks made through orange-groves, where in springtime the air becomes heavily laden with scent.

Such is Habibullah Khan's winter home. Some days previous to his arrival there word is sent on ahead to the Governor and caretakers to have all in readiness. In 1907 the Governor of Jelal'abad was a very foolish man, who did not bother about seeing that the orders were carried out. Some travellers called on him, who said, "Amir Sahib is now only one day off." On hearing it, the Governor fled. The Amir arrived, and was furious to find his palace had been used by the Governor, and that his gardens had been turned into stables.

He quickly sent off a guard to capture the man and bring him before him. Fortunately

for himself, the Governor died as they were escorting him to the Amir. I was told that some kind friend, having heard what kind of punishment was in store for him, had given the man poison.

The supplies of meat being short, and not of as good a quality as the Amir desired, he ordered the butcher to be nailed by his ears to his own shop door, so that passers-by could see the kind of punishment to expect for similar crimes. The head-baker, who was behindhand with his supplies, was thrashed to death.

His Majesty the Amir, when not engaged in affairs of state, amuses himself with fishing and shooting. Good sport is to be had with rod and line in the Kabul River, which flows close by the city. It is not considered etiquette for any of his suite to haul up a fish unless the Amir has got one, and page-boys relate some amusing incidents where, maybe, two or three of the courtiers have hooked a fish, but dare not draw in their lines, lest they should forestall His Majesty in his basket.

If it is at all hot, an attendant stands behind

the Amir's chair as he fishes, and holds a large umbrella up to protect him from the sun. A cordon of guards is formed to keep away all intruders.

There is good shooting in the mountains near at hand, where bear and deer are fairly numerous, and as the Amir is a first-rate shot, he generally returns with a good bag. Large lizards abound in the district, which are killed, their skins being sent up to the leather works in Kabul to be prepared for covering sword-scabbards, daggers, and other articles, as the Amir is keen on this kind of decoration.

One day, suffering from ennui, and being hard put to for amusement, he rode out to the plains above the city, and suddenly stopped and said: "Here we will make a new town. Its name shall be Habib-habad. I will bring water, and trees shall be planted; for the city of Jelal'-abad is very old and insanitary, and cannot be extended owing to its walls, so here shall be built the new city. It shall be called after me, so that all may know I was the man who founded it."

It was an excellent idea really, but as the cost of bringing water will be enormous, and the question of land ownership a somewhat delicate thing to settle, I fear that the place will be only known by its name, not by its buildings.

The high surrounding walls of Jelal'abad are loopholed throughout for musketry, and four large towers command its gates. In each tower two 15-pound field-guns are fixed, and half an hour after sunset the gates are closed. It is then a difficult matter to enter or leave the city before dawn breaks.

Jelal'abad is a delightful place to winter in, with no snow, slight frosts at night, and a pleasant sun in the daytime. After April, however, it resembles a furnace, the heat sometimes being appalling, and in July, 1906, when we passed through, the thermometer registered 99 degrees at ten o'clock at night. No ice or punkahs were to be had either.

It is here where the two roads from Kabul meet, an old road via the Lattahband, and the

new track via Tang-i-garu Pass. The latter was made during Amir Abdul Rahman's reign, and, being a most difficult undertaking, cost many lives and vast sums of money. In 1907 Amir Habibullah said he would not spend any more money in keeping it up, for when the winter is over, the track is repeatedly swept away by avalanches and floods, and he was determined to reopen the road leading via Khurd Kabul Pass (where the English were massacred in 1842).

The Jelal'abad district is very fertile, cotton, maize, and wheat growing in abundance. Large quantities of fruit are floated down the river on rafts made of skins, and landed close to Peshawar, for Afghan melons are in great request there.

Whilst the Amir was staying in Jelal'abad in 1907 he had one of his severe attacks of gout. After being dosed by his *hakims* (native doctors), and getting no relief, he called upon Dr. Gholam Nabi (who had qualified in India) to see if he could relieve him. That gentleman put his patient through a course of treatment,

and in a few weeks' time Habibullah Khan was so delighted with his cure that he presented Dr. Nabi with a handsome backsheesh, at the same time promoting him to be Brigadier-General of Sappers and Miners!

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XII

PECULIAR CUSTOMS

AFGHANS have a custom of using God's name on all possible occasions. They could never be persuaded to eat any animal's flesh unless they were sure the name of God had been pronounced as it was killed. "Allah!" comes from the small child when he makes a good stroke at play; "Allah!" in another tone, and with a very different meaning, is the shepherd's cry when any of his flock are in danger. "In God's name give me pice!" wails every beggar to passers-by; and when a man's statement is doubted in the least, he is quick to swear by "nom i Khuda" that what he says is true.

A delightful custom with them is the giving of beautiful presents as well as trays of sweets to guests who come from a distance; but this is often made a pretext for taxing people in different

districts when their ruler and his chief men make a tour. Notice is sent on ahead some weeks before he is likely to arrive in any place, when householders there are expected to contribute liberally gifts of horses, sheep, carpets, needlework, or anything made specially in their district.

In January, 1908, a small farmer presented His Majesty with four very fine fat sheep at Jelal'abad. This token of goodwill so pleased the Amir that he gave the man 100 gold tillers (equal to about £77 in English money). Such a generous act on the ruler's part spurred on the farmer to further efforts, and no doubt thinking Sirdar Nasarullah Khan would be a likely customer, he made his way to Kabul, taking a large quantity of dried fruits and early spring flowers.

In the uplands of Kabul at that time all vegetation was snowbound. After lubricating the palms of various doorkeepers, he was at last ushered into the presence of Sirdar Nasarullah Khan, then governing Kabul during his brother's absence. With many salutations the offering

was spread before the Sirdar, who asked quite a number of questions. Only too delighted, the farmer responded to them, and added a glowing account of how he had also presented four beautiful sheep to Amir Sahib, and had received a handsome sum of money as a mark of approval.

Sirdar Nasarullah, who is known in Kabul as a mean person, grew a bit restless towards the close of the story, and when it was finished, asked: "Is this true?" "By the beard of Mahomet, it is true, sahib," said the farmer; and to prove his words, produced 100 tillers from his *kamarband*. No doubt he imagined that it might act as an incentive for Sirdar Nasarullah Khan to make him a similar present. To his surprise, this is what he heard: "If my brother cares to waste his money upon a fool, I don't." Turning to his secretary, the Sirdar continued, "And as the treasury can well do with this money, take the hundred tillers from him," and dismissed the farmer with Afghan abuse.

The revenue of Afghanistan is raised in a variety of ways, taxes often being paid in kind

instead of money. For instance, when the favourite Queen was married to Habibullah Khan, notice was given to the district from which his bride came that seven days after his wedding her hair would be unplaited, and pomatum would therefore be required. Some tons of butter arrived in Kabul on the seventh day, and forthwith Ulya Hazrat's old neighbours had orders to contribute a similar amount each year, and thus what is known as the "Queen's Pomatum Tax" was established.

One sees a little octroi-house on every main road into Kabul. A policeman sits outside on his bedstead, suspiciously eyeing all packs that pass by, and pounces down upon any which appear to contain dutiable goods. Merchants taking goods to sell down in India, on reaching Dakka are not only charged export duty, but also must pay 5 per cent. on any cash they may have in hand for trading. The Sirtif of Dakka's office is most lucrative, and the present occupant's father, who died in 1907, amassed a fortune, although his pay was only £5 a week.

It sometimes happens that merchants dealing

in pistachio-nuts, etc., try to evade paying the duty on them at Dakka (the Afghan entrance to the Khyber), and it was at this village my wife and I had a somewhat exciting night in October, 1908. It would be about 6.30 p.m. when we reached the place after a long and tiring journey from Girdikaj, having been on the march for nine hours. We were looking forward to a decent night's rest, when at nine o'clock we were startled by rifles being fired down by the river. It did not require many more shots to make us wide awake.

After putting my wife in a safe place, I called up the *jamadah* of the guard to ask him what was the matter. He said that a party of smugglers were trying to get some cargoes of nuts past the river guard opposite our quarters, but that one of their boats had run ashore, and now smugglers and guard were firing at each other.

It was pitch-dark. We crept up to the top roof and peeped from behind the walls, but could only see the flashes from their rifles, though an occasional plump of a bullet landing

in the mud walls of the village told us they were close at hand.

Next morning there was nothing to be seen of any smugglers; only a half-submerged boat showed where the fight had been, for those who escaped the frontier guards' rifles no doubt were drowned, as Kabul River here runs like a mill-race, and then enters a deep, rocky gorge some miles in length, where they would have no chance.

Kabul city is divided up into districts or small wards, the most important resident, known by the title of the Calantha, being held responsible for the orderliness of his division. He has powers of dealing with small offences, and can order the Kotwali Guard (police) to arrest anyone, and place him in gaol prior to an inquiry by the Kotwal (Governor).

It is the Calantha's duty to obtain names of all men in his district between the ages of sixteen and twenty-eight years. When the police require fresh recruits, these names are placed in a box, and drawn out in the same manner as a lottery. Rich and poor, all fare alike—that is, if they have not squared the

Calantha; and should a man's name be drawn, he must either go or find a substitute, and pay him anything from 100 to 300 rupees, for the pay of the police is only 10 or 12 rupees a month; and when once a man is enlisted in the Kotwal Regiment, he is there for life, only getting his discharge with old age or illness. The police are armed with rifle and bayonet, and are ready to use either on the slightest provocation.

In case of suicide, all the neighbours are fined, it being held by Afghan law that as there were a large number of people living close together, they ought to have seen the man making his preparations, and stopped him. Suicide seldom happens, which speaks well for some of the inhabitants, considering their abject poverty and misery.

It is not the custom to provide asylums for lunatics in Kabul—indeed, people of unsound mind are looked upon as possessed by spirits, and are treated with reverence. They wander at large, and live upon gifts.

There was a room by our garden gates in which lived Baba Khan Mahomet, who strolled

about in a long shirt, and was considered to be holy. This fakir was permitted to do just what he liked, and even when he kicked the Amir's own door one day received no punishment. A string of admirers followed him, after bringing their daily gifts of food to his room. Many a time his procession came meandering about our garden. When Baba Khan had seated himself in a sunny spot, his acolytes arranged themselves around him, and waited reverently for words of wisdom from the well-fed saint.

If we wished to go into our garden, a servant had to be sent to Baba, saying: "Many salaams, grandpa, sir, and we are pleased for you to stay here, but kindly send out all your followers." This he would do, and as he soon wearied of his own company, we knew the spirit would soon move him to depart also. When Sirdar Inyatullah Khan visited India in 1904-5, some of his suite declared that Baba Khan Mahomet appeared and spoke to them one day in Calcutta, and firmly believed he could do such things.

IN OUR KABULI GARDEN.
Loaded apricot-trees.

"SUNFLOWER WALK."
Showing drawing-room window.

To face p. 112.

At the opposite end of the garden lived another fakir, quite a lunatic, but harmless, although at times she was a nuisance. This woman wore no veil over her face, which resembled a death's-head, and spent whole days playing tricks on our sepoys and gardeners, sometimes walking backwards and forwards over beds of seedlings, or throwing into the stream the boots of a sentry who had carelessly set them on one side whilst he lay down to rest. She carried a staff, and often hid round a corner till some servant walked by. Down came her staff suddenly on his shoulders, and away the fakir hobbled, laughing loudly among the sunflowers, where she would then sit, and start reciting chapters from the Koran. No one dared touch her, and we were told that so long as we had her and old Baba Khan in our garden, nobody would touch us.

When Kabulis go out for their evening stroll in Alam Gunj Gardens, it is customary for them to take their singing birds and partridges along with them in cages. These they hang up in the vines whilst they sit beneath chatting,

drinking tea, and gazing at the petunias. All day long each poor bird has been closely covered up with a sort of tea-cosy, and starts chirping as soon as it is removed.

In summer, shepherds lead their flocks up into the mountains to graze, and take with them several large dogs, the latter not for shepherding purposes, but simply to act as guards. They all come back to the plain when autumn arrives. One often meets a great flock moving slowly along. At their head marches a large, stately goat.

Elephants figure largely in the Court life of Kabul, being used by the Amir to take him and his suite out duck-shooting into the marshes near Bala Hissa.

There are about eighteen of these animals. They are used, when the Amir goes on tour, for carrying durbar tents and carpets, and march in processions, drag heavy guns, roll the roads, and on one occasion acted as assistants to the fire-brigade. During the great fire in 1908 they were sent by the Amir to pull down some houses in a bazaar, to prevent the

conflagration spreading. In winter they are all sent down to Jelal'abad, except two, which remain in Kabul for any special work.

When the corn is ripe, a good many farmers let out their harvesting by contract to *cochies* (gypsies of Afghanistan), paying them in grain according to the size of the land.

The corn is laid out in a series of circles and threshed by oxen, which drag a heavy sledge, made of wood and stones, round and round over it. As a rule a small boy stands on the sledge and prods the beasts with his sharp stick, to keep them from eating. When this process is finished, the corn is winnowed by hand. Men simply toss it up in the wind, which acts as a separator.

One often sees oxen and donkeys harnessed side by side, for it is only these animals which are used to do farm-work, as there are no "cart-horses."

Straw is never used as bedding, but is chopped up and sold for fodder. By way of a special treat a little dried lucerne is sometimes mixed with it.

Bullocks which work as pack-animals are often shod like horses. In all cases the creature is shod cold, and the hoof is trimmed to fit the shoe. Lame horses are consequently very common.

There are large numbers of pariah dogs, which, along with hawks and crows, act as city scavengers. Should a horse die by the road-side, he is skinned and his carcass left; and what a sight meets the eye!—a growling, snarling pack of half-starved mongrels. Those which got there first are lying about too swollen with meat to walk, but even they growl when the others go too near them.

These dogs seem to have their recognized quarters, and woe betide any unfortunate canine stranger who strays beyond his own district! He will be lucky if he gets back alive. In appearance the Afghan pariah is not unlike our smooth-coated sheep-dogs, and in winter-time, when food is scarce, he grows very savage.

The Afghan is not a lover of dogs. He sometimes keeps a pup for a short time, but soon wearies of his playmate, and turns him

adrift to fend for himself, but before doing so invariably docks his tail and crops his ears, regardless of the animal's age.

Horses are never docked, which is an excellent idea. It enables them to protect themselves from the swarms of flies that infest the place in summer.

Sheep are kept as milch animals, and to prevent their lambs taking all their milk the mothers wear small sacks made of rags.

CHAPTER XIII

RAMAZAN, THE HOLY MONTH OF ROSA

To *moolah*, beggar, soldiers, and workman in Government works the greatest month of all the year!

To the *moolah*, for then he must pray without ceasing, be ready before dawn to give the call to prayer, and cheer on any laggards who fain would break their fast, making illness their excuse; to the beggar, for is it not written in the Koran that, during this month especially, alms should be given to the poor and needy? to the soldier, because he is excused even the small amount of drill he is usually called upon to perform; and to the man in any Government works at Kabul, because only the lightest of tasks are given, and even then the best part of his day is spent in sleep.

Great preparations are made for some days

preceding Ramazan. Extra food is purchased, sheep are killed and salted; all is got ready for a thirty days' fast and thirty nights of feasting.

During this holy month of Rosa no Mahomedan may take bite or sup from dawn until sunset, neither may he smoke. He may swallow nothing but his own saliva from the time of morning gun until he hears a welcome boom at sunset.

At these times strangers must be extra careful in passing through the bazaars, for there the wild-eyed *gazi* (religious fanatic) perambulates, only too ready to make sure of Paradise by killing an "unbeliever."

Should any man be found breaking his fast (except in illness or on a journey), he is heavily fined, and then fastened on a donkey's back facing its tail, and as it is driven through the bazaars the populace are at liberty to throw anything they choose at the culprit, till finally he himself is thrown into the river. For a second offence half his property is confiscated, and he is put in gaol for some years; and,

should he be caught a third time, death is the penalty.

The fasters are most punctilious in keeping times of prayer and observing the order that feet, hands, forearms, and mouth should first be thoroughly washed, especially the latter; and, who can blame them when a few drops of water trickle, by accident, down the parched throats?

When Ramazan occurs in July, and the temperature is at 90 degrees, fasting becomes doubly hard.

To officials and better-class merchants, the keeping of Rosa is not so trying, as Government offices and shops are not opened until midday, and then only for an hour or so. They spend their nights in feasting and their mornings in sleep.

To announce the advent of Ramazan a salute of twenty-one guns is fired at sight of the new moon. Supposing it should be cloudy, and the planet invisible, then the date is taken from the Mahomedan calendar.

As Ramazan proceeds the people grow very irritable; fights and rows are frequent.

When the last day of Rosa draws to a close, hundreds of anxious eyes are turned westwards, in hopes of seeing the new moon. Not only does its appearance mean that the trying fast is over, but to him who first reaches the Amir with the news a length of cloth is given, along with a good backsheesh. Again a salute is fired, bands promenade the city, and people go about saying how thankful they are to have come safely through another Rosa.

Next day is Eid. The Amir attends service in Eidgar Musjid (the Afghan St. Paul's, which will hold some ten or twelve thousand worshippers), attended by every official of importance, from his brother Sirdar Nasarullah Khan downwards. Roads are lined with troops, to keep back the dense masses of people, and one long shout of "Salaam alaikum" (Good-morning) rolls over them as His Majesty drives slowly along.

The Khan i Moolah (Archbishop) conducts the service, and at its conclusion backsheesh is distributed by all who can afford it.

A review of troops concludes the morning's

show, the remainder of the day being spent in visiting friends and general rejoicing.

Eid holidays extend over three days, during which time it is expected that all males will visit a *ziarat*, or holy man's grave, leaving an offering upon it for the priest in charge.

CHAPTER XIV

WINTER IN KABUL

Snow generally begins to come early in December, though it seldom lies on the ground for long, and it is not until the end of the month that we get a heavy downfall. The winter of 1903-4 was exceptionally severe, and did not break up until February was over. One week everything in the tannery was completely frozen up, and I was looking out for a decent stretch of ice to skate on, when I heard that the overflow from Kabul River was frozen and clear of snow, some boys having swept it in order to slide.

I took my skates, and was soon spinning over the smooth surface. A crowd collected who had never seen skates before, and when I tried outside edge or cutting figures, they exclaimed: "Name of God, now he's down! Ah!

the four friends of the Prophet are keeping him up!" and so on.

When I removed my skates, these folks were anxious to examine them, and asked how it was that a man could stand with one leg on them and still travel backwards.

To keep a very forward questioner quiet, I suggested that, as he was wearing English boots, he ought to try a pair of English skates. He showed some reluctance to, but his friends egged him on, and soon the skates were firmly fixed on his feet, and I set him off on his first trip. Never shall I forget the sight. I laughed till I was obliged to sit down and cover my eyes. Shouts of encouragement from the spectators failed to drown the skater's yells and curses. Up and down he went, till his long turban fell off, and, unwinding itself, got mixed up with his legs, whilst his shaven head seemed to bounce about like a large tennis-ball.

"Take these arms of the devil off my feet; for the love of God take them off!" he called to me.

I managed to say: "You went there of your

our free-will, and can come off of your own free-will."

Then he crawled off on his hands and knees, and on reaching the bank, said: "My back is broken in seven places, and my head is cracked in ten."

News of this new form of entertainment soon spread, and the following morning His Majesty the Amir sent a firman requesting me to appear before him. At 2.30 I presented myself at the *arrk*, when he asked a good many questions, and ordered his gardeners to prepare me a sheet of ice in his gardens.

A few days later, all being ready, I turned out to show him what English skating was like. Habibullah Khan took great interest in it, and said: "Yes, this is good. Now one of my *gholam butchas*" (Court attendants) "shall put the skates on."

As a young fellow struggled to obey his orders, the Amir laughed until the tears came. During an interval he observed: "It is good that all should learn." No sooner was this remark made than several portly officials, stand-

ing by, found that they had urgent business to attend to, and begged leave to go.

Prayer-time was near at hand, so the afternoon's entertainment was brought to a close. Habibullah Khan went off to prepare for his devotions, dryly remarking: "I am pleased to see that my courtiers are more anxious to work than to learn a new sport."

I was the only European in Afghanistan then, and although such little things as this made pleasant breaks in the monotony of winter, I was not sorry when I received orders to go home in March and purchase a plant of machinery for the new leather works.

Often heavy falls of snow came, followed by brilliant sunshine, so that my first duty in a morning was to see all roofs in the leather works cleared as early as possible. The men set to work in lines like haymakers, armed with wooden shovels, and threw the snow down.

This is done throughout the city, and it is best to walk warily, for the Afghan, liking a joke, is only too pleased if he can land an extra large shovelful on the passer-by below. It was

no light matter to get all the roofs at the leather works clear. To cheer my men I used to promise them leave for the rest of the day as soon as it was finished, and always remained on the roofs with them to prevent fights between those who worked and those who tried to slink away to the boiler-fires. Many of them looked perished, standing about in slush with only leaky slippers on their feet, so I made them some hot cocoa in a bucket, with plenty of sugar in it. This they drank from horns, old tins, or wooden bowls, and then, with renewed calls to Allah, finished off the last length of roofing at top speed.

There were only five English people in Kabul on Christmas Day, 1905—viz., Messrs. Donovan and Butler (electricians), Mr. Finlaison (constructional engineer), Mrs. Thornton, and myself. The little party met at our bungalow, and, according to custom, dined and spent the evening together as pleasantly as possible in such an out-of-the-way spot.

During the day a dainty letter arrived from a lady and gentleman in the city, saying:

"DEAR FRIENDS,

"This is your Xmas Day, but you are far from your home, and have no one to give you presents and look after you. Therefore my husband and I beg your acceptance of the gifts and fruits sent herewith. We wish you happy Xmas! If you please, send word at what time you dine, as we wish to contribute a native *pillau* to your other dishes."

After partaking of tinned-lobster patties and roast ducks, we decided to eat the *pillau*, and that, as it was a native dish, we must do it properly, seated on the carpet, without any spoons or forks. This was done amid much merriment, the servants coming to the conclusion that "English sahibs are mad at Kismas."

When the *pillau* was demolished, we tidied ourselves up and returned to the table for plum-pudding. One member of the party produced a long-saved bottle of *simkin* (as champagne is called out there), and this was opened in breathless expectation; but alas! it did not pop!

The evening was enlivened with music, for we had a small piano, and the duet "When we are married" sounded very funny from two gentlemen of the party who can only sing on Christmas Days.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE WORKS

THAT year several attempts were made by native officials to wreck the new leather machinery, and one had to keep a sharp lookout to circumvent their plots. Sometimes they dropped nails into machines; liquid glue and emery-powder took the place of oil in lubricators on the shafting; valves were screwed down tightly, nuts loosened, and many other such tricks tried, some, unfortunately for me, with success.

This entailed a lot of hard work, and often it was a struggle to get matters straight again. I knew that jealous officials were at the bottom of the mischief, though they came to me, smiling in a sickly way, to sympathize, and say they hoped I should be successful in catching the culprits.

Building operations were in progress then,

and it was not at all an uncommon thing to find all my bricklayers had stopped work because there was no lime; or, if they had lime, there was no sand. Perhaps the joiners had wood, but no screws or nails, and so on, until one's temper got a bit raw. Then the only thing to do was to lay hold of a leading storekeeper by his beard, and promise him a thrashing if the necessary materials were not produced immediately.

It is never wise for an Englishman in Kabul to make either a threat or a promise unless he is prepared to carry it out, for he is looked upon as a man of his word, and native cloth-sellers have been known to swear by the word of an Englishman that their stuff is genuine wool. A favourite trick was to stop supplies of tanning materials, so that hides would get spoilt; but this came to an end, for one day, being completely out of patience, I marched seventy or eighty men off to the central stores in the city, and ordered each man to seize as much as he could carry and bring it to the works. When the storekeeper asked for a receipt, I referred

him to the head tannery clerk, saying that it was his business to give receipts, and mine to tan leather. These rogues made a regular practice of booking quantities of materials to Government works, selling them in the bazaars, and dividing the proceeds amongst themselves.

Afghan workmen, on the whole, are fine fellows, and only require a little encouragement to bring the best out of them. I introduced a system of weekly prizes, giving four rupees to the four men who kept their machines in the cleanest condition, or showed most improvement in work.

Friday being Mahomedan Sabbath, the prizes were distributed on Thursday afternoons. One day it happened that old Baba Gholam Sadic, who helps to sweep out the works, was awarded a prize, much to the other men's astonishment. They said: "Why should an old man who isn't fit to work a machine get a prize?" I replied: "Baba Gholam Sadic takes as much pride in keeping the floor clean as you do your machines. If he didn't keep it clean, your machines would soon be dirty." "Name of God, but it is the

truth, and he well deserves the money!" they said.

There was a workman who was incorrigibly lazy. I tried everything I could think of to get him to work, but without success, and as he stood about 6 feet 3 inches, and weighed 17 or 18 stone, he was not a man to be easily dealt with. One day I came across him idling as usual, and said to him: "Give me the tool you are working with, and you"—turning to another of the men standing near—"go and fetch some empty sacks, and make a bed for Abdul Guffoor; he is not well."

The sacking was brought and spread out on the floor; a pillow was improvised out of a sheepskin, and when all was ready I told Abdul to lie down and rest, for he was ill. He vainly protested that he was all right, but I said: "Though you cannot see it yourself, you must have fever, for you look so flushed!" Slowly he lowered his huge bulk on to the bed, and I started to work at the table in his place.

This somewhat novel treatment soon got noised abroad, and it seemed as if every man in

the works had to make a journey through that room. The giant tried to get up, but I told him to lie down and keep still, and that I would put a sentry to watch him, for people in a fever sometimes harmed themselves. A few minutes later I was called away, and on my return found the place in an uproar. Abdul was very much recovered, for he had just pulled a handful of whiskers from a fellow-workman who had been chaffing him. Never again had I to reprove him for laziness, and the mere mention of a bed caused smiles to pass over the other workmen's faces.

When a workman is promoted to being a foreman or storekeeper, he generally grows lazy, and begins quietly and systematically stealing materials, often starting a small shop at home with the plunder.

One morning, whilst the works were being extended, I called the foreman bricklayer to me, and said: "Now, be very careful to soak all the bricks in water before you use them." "By my eyes, I will," he replied. Passing him a little later, I discovered that he had ignored my order

completely. "Why are you such a fool?" I asked. He replied: "I forgot, sahib.' "Very well," said I; "you will now have your memory refreshed by a thrashing, and if you forget again, you shall be soaked yourself." Two orderlies then thrashed him.

At 2 p.m. I again visited that part of the works, and—would you believe it?—that man, even after his thrashing, was too lazy to see that the bricks were soaked, and dry ones were being used. Said I: "As you will not soak the bricks, now, according to my promise, you yourself shall be soaked;" and forthwith he was placed in the river up to his neck for half an hour. This took place late in autumn, when the water was chilly from the first snows in the hills, and afterwards the man gave no further trouble over bricks, but became quite obliging.

CHAPTER XVI

MADAT KHAN

In November, 1905, I had occasion to ask for some twenty-five leather-sewers, to make belts for driving new machinery in the leather works. Madat Khan, who has charge of all water-bag makers in Sudda Bazaar, was the man I applied to, and he promptly sent me the men required, only to take them away again next day. I wrote asking him why they had been removed, but got no reply. Moreover, Madat Khan tore up my letter, threw it on the ground, and spat on it, saying: "This is how I treat Englishmen's letter." So I sent two soldiers to arrest him and bring him to the works.

Later that day they returned, saying: "Madat is out." "All right," I said. "Go back and stay at his house till he comes, even if you have to wait until to-morrow." The two soldiers did

not come back next morning, so I started off another guard to look for them. These sent a message back, saying: "Madat Khan is ill, and cannot come." Then I told one of my trusted men to go and make inquiries. He soon found out that the guard were being royally entertained by the delinquent, so that they should not arrest him. Falling into the spirit of the game, I ordered three other sepoys to go and arrest him, for I knew that as he had started paying he would have to go on. These did not return, so in the afternoon four more were sent, with orders not to return without their man.

The following morning my twenty-five belt-sewers turned up, but I asked: "Where is Madat Khan?" "Sahib, he is ill." "Ill or not ill, he must come; so go and tell him this, and bring him here on his bedstead." At mid-day four of his oldest workmen came to me, asking if I would forgive him. "No," said I; "he must come to the works." They departed, held another consultation, and on their return said: "If the mem-sahib were to ask you to pardon him, would you do so?" "Yes," I said.

"If my wife says he ought not to be punished, I will let him off."

Jubilant at the prospect of an easy victory, they set out for our bungalow. At the close of the day, when I returned from the works, there they were, all ready with their tale, and a large quantity of dried fruits for a sweet-offering to their new judge. They were somewhat surprised when these were gently but firmly declined. After stating their case—and, to do them justice, they gave a fairly true account of the case, no doubt because I could hear them—they were sadly disappointed, for my wife asked, "Has this man done wrong?" "Yes," they replied. "Then he ought to be punished," was the rejoinder. So in the morning I sent word to Madat Khan that if he did not come down to the leather works I should report him to the Amir Sahib, and leave him to his fate, though I did not want to do this, because if the Amir had got hold of him, some gruesome punishment would have been his lot.

At 10.30 he arrived, looking very miserable. He had spent nearly all his money in feeding

and backsheeshing his uninvited guests, and now felt sorry for himself. As he was a man fairly advanced in years, I did not have him thrashed, but made him crawl on his hands and knees through the works, crying: "I am being justly punished for hindering Amir Sahib's work!"

The crawling done, he was set on a donkey, facing its tail (a great disgrace in Afghanistan), and made to go all round the works again, still crying his song. A large sheet of paper was then pinned on his chest, on which was written an account of his misdeeds, and the old reprobate was placed in charge of a sentry in the entrance of the works for all to see what kind of a fool Madat Khan had made of himself, a clerk being stationed by him to read the paper aloud at intervals.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XVII

GENERAL MANAGEMENT

THEFT is one of the most difficult things to guard against in the works, and the strictest orders have to be issued to prevent workmen stealing pieces of leather, thread, and tools.

The turban is a favourite receptacle for all manner of things, and at the conclusion of a day's work all turbans have to be unwound and shaken, and their wearers must jump two poles in front of the foreman to shake any loose nails, etc., from their nether garments. Even after this guards run their hands over the men before allowing them to pass the sentry. This seems hard, but during my first six months' service all the small knives in the factory were stolen, and on my inquiring about them, the only reply I could get was: "God knows where those knives are; I don't."

During the summer months coolies are hard to get. My gang dwindled away, and I applied to the Niab Saltanat (Sirdar Nasarullah) for a fresh supply. He replied: "Coolies are scarce, so I will send you 200 prisoners from the city gaol. They arrived the following day, accompanied by a strong guard. Some in gangs of four, chained by the neck, others in pairs, all wearing leg-irons, they were the most villainous crowd I have ever seen, and absolutely reckless about what they did.

Work! Well, that was the last thing they intended doing. Loot was what they had come for, and loot they meant to have. All sorts of things disappeared, and when one of the foremen attempted to stop their depredations, he was laid out insensible with a brick. I punished some severely, and threatened all with the most dreadful penalties, but one of them said: "You can't be more severe than the Governor and head-gaoler. Look at my back!" Lifting up his only garment, he showed me a mass of sores that had been inflicted with a red-hot iron.

I did not waste any more words, but called

the captain of their guard, telling him to take them anywhere he liked, but that I preferred to do without their assistance.

Late one evening a sergeant from the tannery guard came to the bungalow to inform me that the sentries had captured two water-carriers stealing leather, and asked whether he should send them to the Governor of Kabul Gaol or keep them until the next day.

"Lock them up!" I said, "and to-morrow morning an inquiry shall be made into the matter."

Next day the thieves were paraded, and I asked them: "Are you guilty?"

"Yes," they said, "we are, sahib."

"Will you be tried by me, or be sent to the Governor of the city?"

"For the love of God don't send us there! We shall be in gaol a year before our case comes on, for we have not enough money to pay the judge to try us. Do what you like with us, but do not send us to the Governor!"

After thinking over the matter, I decided on their punishment, and later in the morning all

the workmen were paraded to witness it. Afterwards I gave the two water-carriers some ointment for their sore backs, and in a few days they returned to work again, quite content, for they had not been fined or had their pay stopped. Fining the workmen is no good, and only means depriving their wives and children of bread, for they are paid but 12 to 15 rupees a month.

The two water-carriers, far from bearing me malice for their punishment, came up to Indarabi, when my wife and I were leaving for England, bringing us two small silk handkerchiefs as a parting gift, and to say "B'aman i Khuda" (Good-bye).

As one gains the Afghans' confidence one is often asked to act as arbitrator in their disputes. Their own judges are always open to receive bribes, and therefore the highest bidder wins the day. Although Mahomedans hate and despise the Feringhi, they know full well that he will do his best to give justice without any preliminary squaring.

One day two men came asking me to settle a

case of trespass and damage done by cows. Their case was as follows: Mahomet Akbar owned a field of young corn, close to which Said Gul's cows were grazing. They got into the corn and spoiled a lot of it, and now Mahomet asked Said Gul to pay damages.

Said Gul said there was a hole in the wall, through which his cows walked, and it was Mahomet's fault. I asked whether anyone was minding the cows when it happened. "Yes," said he; "a boy." "How old was the boy?" "Seven years, sahib." "Who owns the wall?" "Mahomet Akbar."

After thinking matters over, I said: "The wall belongs to Mahomet Akbar, and he ought to keep it in good repair. Said Gul should have a man to mind his cows, instead of keeping only a boy seven years old. Mahomet Akbar must find materials for repairing this wall, and Said Gul the labour."

The decision seemed to please both parties, and after I had given them tea and cigarettes, they parted on good terms.

CHAPTER XVIII

HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTION

When Habibullah Khan promised to inspect the new leather works in 1906, I had to set a special guard inside the building at night to prevent paid agents of the officials from wrecking the machines, and passed many an anxious night before the great day arrived.

Over two months elapsed, and then, one Wednesday morning, men came from the *arrk* bringing His Majesty's tents, and I knew he meant coming to spend Thursday inside the works enclosure. A large durbar tent was pitched first, then numerous smaller ones, some for retiring in, and others for kitchens. Early on Thursday his housekeeper and cooks followed with furniture, stoves, and cooking utensils. It was about 10.30 when the great man arrived

in his carriage, accompanied by his courtiers and surrounded by a strong escort of cavalry.

After being shown various samples of leather produced there, Habibullah Khan set off on a tour of inspection right through the works, and, wherever he went, members of his body-guard were stationed at a distance of eight yards apart to prevent any attempt at assassination, and did not allow anyone to approach the Amir without permission.

His Majesty showed keen interest in many machines, and was especially pleased to see his own subjects working them in a satisfactory manner, and at the cleanliness of the place.

When one o'clock came, His Majesty retired to make preparations for prayers, afterwards taking his midday meal. Availing myself of this opportunity, I managed to reach my office, hoping to get a much-needed rest, having been in the works since 4.30 that morning; but it was not to be. Two men from the Amir's kitchen appeared, laden with many kinds of food. I, of course, had to eat some and appear

to like it, and then a page-boy came to say: "Amir Sahib wants you again now."

Habibullah Khan had finished his meal, and continued his inspection, asking a number of questions relating to the many processes hides have to go through whilst they are being turned into leather.

Another prayer-time came, it being now 3.45; and whilst His Majesty was at prayers I did a lightning change from my overalls into morning dress, having received an invitation to take tea with him.

His Majesty said: "Yes, it is good. Now we have finished with inspecting the works, you are again properly clothed for the occasion;" and, turning to his courtiers, continued: "It is proper that men should wear clothes suitable for their work, and some of you are too proud and too ignorant to know that there is no disgrace in wearing old, dirty clothes in the same manner that this Englishman has done!"

Seeing the Amir pleased with things in general, I laid before him a scheme for extending the works, and suggested the addition of a

boot factory. After a careful examination of the plans, he sanctioned them. Then I presented my petition asking for an increase of pay for the work-people, at the same time saying that His Majesty, having seen the hard work they were doing, doubtless would realize that they required more food, and that their present pay was not enough to buy it.

Again His Majesty consented, and, signing the list, said: "Yes, it is good; for no man can work a horse with an empty stomach."

Time slipped by, what with conversation and drinking tea, and at six o'clock the Amir said he would take a final walk round the suggested site for his boot factory, and depart. Before stepping into his carriage, His Majesty said he was thoroughly satisfied at the progress of the works, and had signed an order for my salary to be raised; also that he would present me with the gold medal of Kabul as a mark of honour.

When I was driving home, my orderly informed me that the officials had had a fatted bullock tethered outside the tannery walls, ready to kill and distribute to the poor as a thank-

offering should the Amir Sahib be displeased with the Englishman and his work. Needless to say, the animal's life was spared.

On Friday I heard that as Habibullah Khan returned home, he called in at the Government Pay Office, and was very angry at its dirty condition. Seizing a heavy almond rod, he laid about him manfully, and his courtiers, taking their cue from him, thrashed anyone they could find on the premises.

His Majesty said that the clerks had nothing dirtier to handle than money, and he had just returned from the tannery, where one of the dirtiest trades in the country was carried on, and if that place could be kept clean, the Pay Office must be also.

A general who was in charge of it was reduced to the rank of captain, and fined a year's pay, as well as being severely beaten.

The clerks paid a similar fine, but, like all Afghan officials, quickly reimbursed themselves, taking an extra rupee or so out of every poor unfortunate native's pay, so, apart from their bruises, did not suffer much.

CHAPTER XIX

A "TAMASHA"

After His Majesty's second inspection, in 1908, when the boot factory had been completed, I promised my men a *tamasha* (entertainment).

A committee of eight was selected from the foremen, and these were deputed to spend the money in meat, rice, tea, bread, fruits, sugar, and sweets.

I asked them, "Where would you like it to be held?" They replied, "In your garden." "But," said I, "if 300 men spend a day there, how about my garden? The fruit will be stolen, and the flowers trampled down." "Sahib," they replied, "leave that to us; we will deal with any man who eats your fruit or touches a flower."

Knowing what kind of punishments they meted out to each other, I said, "All right; go

ahead." A cook from the bazaar was engaged, who arrived at Indarabi a day previous to the *tamasha*, with bricklayers, who soon built fire-places of mud and stones, ready for holding his cauldrons.

Whilst this took place in our compound, carpenters were busy fixing up cross-bars on the lawn, for we intended to have pillow-fights, amongst other English sports.

Next morning first arrivals awoke us at six o'clock. They appeared dragging sheep with them, which they killed, and arranged on the cook's bedstead. The latter gentleman and his assistants prepared the meat, cutting it up into small pieces ready for *pillau*.

Any number of willing helpers arrived, too, to chop wood and sugar, fetch skins of water, or wash rice; and at eight o'clock, hearing a loud "Allah!" we asked, "How are you getting on?" "The first pan of meat is now filled," they replied. Soon all the other vessels received their quota, and were simmering in a cloud of smoke.

By this time a band of five musicians with

their dancing-boy had arrived, and commenced tuning up beneath a great plane-tree in the garden. These had hand-drums, *rubobs* (something like mandolines), and another funny instrument, such as one sees angels playing on in pictures by old masters.

One man held two pieces of stone and chinked them together, working himself up into quite a frenzy over it as the *borzinga* (dancing-boy) sidled and balanced to and fro, or whirled his skirts to the admiring audience, who were seated around on carpets.

I asked how old this dancing-boy was. "Sahib, nobody knows, for when any hairs appear on his face they are pulled out by the band-conductor, to keep him ever young."

It was Friday, so the crowd looked gay in their bright-coloured, clean clothes and turbans. The committee took the precaution of issuing tickets to all the guests, but found out that a number of interlopers had got in to the *tamasha*.

These they bundled out, after giving them a good pommelling, guards were placed in different parts of the garden, and I had to intervene

several times, or serious fights would have taken place.

More important guests, such as clerks and storekeepers, arrived at half-past eleven. These were brought upstairs, two large sitting-rooms facing the garden being placed at their disposal. Tea, of course, was handed round often, with cakes upstairs and bread down below.

Afghans are something like children, for, the simpler any entertainment is, the better they appreciate it. Books of "Pictures from Many Lands" kept the company amused for hours, and as none of them knew a word of English, my wife and I divided our guests into two parties, and did our best to explain things in Persian.

Pictures of large country-houses in England caused much astonishment, and one man asked, "What is your King doing to allow so many big men to live? Why does he not take these houses himself and put their owners in gaol?"

Illustrations of seaports passed their understanding altogether, for, with one exception, none of them had ever seen the sea. This man,

who had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, passing through India down to Bombay, waxed eloquent about the way a ship can roll without being upset.

His account of a rough sea was exceedingly funny, and he wound up his narrative by saying, "The devil lives in the sea. He is jealous of true believers" (*i.e.*, Mahomedans) "going to Mecca, and tries his best to upset all boats that take them, but Mahomet asks Allah to lend his aid, and so the sea is not allowed to remain rough always, only sometimes."

My wife played a few pieces to them on the piano, and they most politely said they liked the music, but looked mystified and a bit miserable. So then my wife began some marches, and soon had all the feet beating time. With sparkling eyes, one man said, "By the beard of the Prophet, we could march to war with this tune in our ears."

When midday came our company hastened off to a *musjid* (church) close by, after washing in a stream, and when service was finished returned, to find food was ready.

KABULI SHOPS.

AT THE WORKMEN'S "TAMASHA."

Pillau in the compound.

To face p. 154.

Upstairs guests were served first, after which the outdoor crowd came into the compound by parties, and sat in lines on mats, along which their dishes of *pillau* were arranged.

After eating as much as possible, back they went to sit quietly round the musicians, who were now composing songs in turn, mainly about flowers growing in the garden and the Englishman's hospitality.

Two *chillums* (native pipes) passed from hand to hand, and cigarettes were served out with more tea. Old greybeards looked so comical trying English smokes for the first time!

At about 3.30 sports for younger men commenced with a race in sacks tied at the waist. It was difficult to prevent rows, for no sooner had the competitors started than they seized hold of one another and tried to knock each other down.

But we got matters set right by starting all over again. There were so many entries, that this race had to be run off in heats, and my attention was drawn to Futteh Mahomet, who had won his two heats in easy fashion, and refused

to give up his sack. On examining it, I found out he had cut two holes at the bottom to put his feet through, and as he had always taken up an outside position, where I could not see him, had managed to romp home. We soon altered this, and had a real sporting finish.

A three-legged race followed, which caused no end of fun; for the winners, to show their ability, ran round the garden and tried to jump a small stream. Not being of one mind as to the moment when to spring, they fell with a splash, and so were cooled down.

Then came a pillow-fight, competitors sitting astride a pole 4½ feet from the ground armed with bags of wool.

Some took the matter very seriously, all did their best, and the final was a hot tussle between Polwan (prize wrestler) and a slim youth who used his head a bit. Knowing Polwan to be rather top-heavy, this youth suddenly aimed at his feet instead of his head, and so upset the fighting man that he swung over and dropped on to the grass below.

The concluding event was a tug-o'-war—

Boot Factory *v.* Leather Works—and the boot operatives, being somewhat lighter than the tanners, were soon dragged over the line, amidst triumphant shouts of "Allah!"

Then the winning team began to jeer at their opponents, and were rather surprised at being challenged a second time. Once more they pulled, and this time, strange to relate, the bootmakers held the tanners without seeming pumped.

After five minutes or so, I said, "Rest awhile, and then pull again." At the third struggle I walked down the course to see that all was right, and discovered that the bootmakers had fastened an extra length of rope to their end and hitched it round the trunk of a mulberry-tree. When it became generally known, there was a regular uproar, and it took me all my time to prevent bloodshed.

As it was getting late, I told them it was time to go home, and so, with many salaams, my wife and I took leave of our guests at six o'clock, thoroughly tired out with our day of entertaining.

CHAPTER XX

THE MOINASALTANAT AS A FOOTBALLER

THE life of the tanner and currier in Afghanistan is not an easy one, and he is called upon to produce sundry and divers kinds of work. We were just sitting down to dinner one evening when a messenger was announced from the Sirdar Inyatullah Khan, who showed me an old football case, and said that the Sirdar wished me to make two more footballs like the sample sent, and also, as usual, the work was urgent, it being the intention of the Sirdar to kick one of them at four o'clock the following afternoon.

In my reply to the Sirdar, I told him that Inshallah (D.V.) I would produce the ball by the time appointed. Fortunately, there was some leather suitable for making it, and at four o'clock the ball was handed to the Sirdar.

Sirdar Inyatullah Khan.

Turkish Colonel.

THE MOINASALTANAT'S FIRST LESSON IN FOOTBALL.

To face p. 158.

Two days later a letter arrived from the Sirdar saying that he was very much pleased with the new ball, but as he had no knowledge of how to play the game of football, would I come and teach him? It is taken for granted out in the East that Englishmen can play any kind of game.

Being an old enthusiast at the sport, I was not at all loth to renew my acquaintance with it; so, attiring myself correctly, I turned up at the appointed hour ready for my pupil, and showed him how to drop-kick, punt, etc. He found great difficulty in the first-named, repeatedly knocking the ball with his shin instead of kicking it with the toe of his boot. Anyhow, he must have enjoyed himself, for at the conclusion of the lesson he asked me to take tea, and said that he would be pleased to resume his lesson the following night.

After further experience of the game, he asked me to mark out a football ground in the barracks square, and ordered a carpenter to supply the necessary goal-posts and touch-flags.

A few days later, all being ready, I informed His Royal Highness, and he said: "Now, from what you have told me about the game, it is usual to have sides; so I will make up a side of my own attendants, and our opponents shall be Said Mahmoud Effendi (the Turkish Colonel) and ten men of his regiment. You, Mr. Thornton, must run about and explain the rules as the game proceeds."

Said Mahmoud is a good sportsman, but his wild troopers played havoc with one's shins, and I was almost lamed before the game was over. At half-time the Sirdar decided that his side ought to win, so, as they were showing signs of wear, I was included in his team, and had a real gruelling for the remainder of the game, it being imagined the correct thing by our opponents to play on to the Feringhi. This was done in all good spirit, yet at the same time one received some nasty knocks before the game was won. His Royal Highness had provided his team with white vests from his own stores, and they looked very smart and workman-like before the game "started."

The Sirdar Inyatullah Khan, who is only nineteen years of age, gives promise of making a good man later on, for he is very eager to learn all he can about his military duties, taking his place in the ranks as an ordinary sepoy.

Not content with this, he goes through the gymnastic course which has been introduced by Said Mahmoud, the newly-appointed Colonel and instructor to the recently-formed Je-di-di Regiment (Kaffirs converted to Islam). Said Mahmoud Effendi, like all foreign officials of the Afghan Government, has a difficult position to fill, for the other military officers are savagely jealous of his success with his regiment. He has not only had a good training in Turkey, but for some time was stationed in Berlin, where he seems to have taken full advantage of his opportunities.

The Afghan commissioned officer has little, if any, military knowledge, and often turns his back on his men after giving an order, trusting to luck or some old soldiers to get him through his difficulties. This can be well understood,

as some of the so-called Generals do not understand the ordinary recruits' drill.

To an old volunteer it was an amusing sight to see a parade of troops where the officers issued orders and did not know how to carry them out.

But to return to my friend Said Mahmoud. This gentleman is a firm believer in physical training, and he not only drills his men on modern lines, but puts his regiment through a regular course of gymnastics. Being an exceptionally well-developed man himself, he is able to wield the 100-lbs. bar-bell with apparent ease. He and the young Sirdar are great friends, the latter taking the keenest interest in this innovation. There is a marked improvement in the deportment of His Royal Highness since he joined the regiment.

Just before we left Kabul the latest recruit was Sirdar Gholam Haider Khan, aged six years, son of Sirdar Omar Jan, the Amir's half-brother. This small child was a great favourite with the troopers, turning up to drill in a proper uniform, armed with a toy rifle, and

THE MOINASALTANAT, SIRDAR INYATULLAH KHAN.

1 2 3

1. SAID MAHMOUD EFFENDI (TURKISH COLONEL).
2. THE MOINASALTANAT.
3. SIRDAR GHOLAM HAIDER KHAN.

To face p. 162.

taking his place in the ranks until the regiment moved off. At this point Said Mahmoud would call out: "Sepoy Jan, two paces to the front," giving him the order to "Silah how" (Shoulder arms). There the child would remain standing, nothing inducing him to move until he received permission from his Colonel.

When His Majesty the Amir returned from his Indian tour, he decided that all Government buildings and factories should fly the Afghan flag; so, the leather works being included in that category, I received orders to prepare and fix a flagstaff in the most prominent place in the works, for when all was ready, His Royal Highness Sirdar Inyatullah Khan would come down and hoist the colours. He arrived in full Field-Marshal's uniform, accompanied by the Military Secretary of State and a full suite. After a kind of prayer, the Sirdar slowly hoisted the flag, the performance being accompanied by many calls to Allah to bless and preserve it in safety.

At the conclusion of this ceremony the Sirdar inspected the works, and showed great interest

in watching various machines which are used in the making of boots and leather, being specially interested in that machine which screws the soles on to the boots, cutting screws from a coil of wire in proportion to the thickness of the sole.

Before leaving, the Sirdar distributed a large quantity of sweets (sugared almonds) to the workmen, according to native custom, so when prayer-time came I gave the men an extra half-hour to eat their sweets in.

The Afghan workman is allowed three-quarters of an hour at midday to say his prayers and get his food, and as there were about 300 men employed in the works, a *moolah* was appointed to look after their spiritual needs.

One day this cleric came to me in great trouble, saying that the men would not assemble behind him when he gave the *arsan* (the call to prayers), but that he had not yet thrashed them, and asked permission to do so. I told him that I would see what could be done in the matter, and, calling the men together, asked

AT THE KABUL LEATHER WORKS.

"Moolah" calling the workmen to prayers.

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them why they did not keep to their midday prayer-time, according to the teaching of the Koran. The men said they would not pray behind this man, who, they said, was not a clean *moolah*.

As this was a most serious charge to make, I said: "All right, an inquiry shall be held; meanwhile please yourselves whom you pray behind, but you must say your prayers according to the orders of your Koran and your King."

After a thorough investigation, nothing serious was proved, and by degrees the *moolah* managed to get back a fair number of his flock. This backing-up of the *moolah* stood me in good stead at a later date, for when the Holy War (*Jehad*) was being preached in Kabul in May, 1908, on the quiet, he offered his protection should it be needed.

CHAPTER XXI

FLOOD IN THE WORKS

In the spring of 1908 we had very heavy rains for about a week, and this, combined with the melting snow, soon caused the river to overflow. One Friday afternoon (Mahomedan Sunday) a man came running up to the bungalow to inform me that the water was in the bottom floor of the factory, and was rapidly rising. The road near the works was under water, but I managed to get through, and sent off soldiers to the nearest houses to command any able-bodied men to act as balers. Reports were sent to the Amir and Sirdar Nasarullah Khan asking for men and pumps.

By frantic efforts we managed to keep the water from gaining upon us, and 100 men were sent off to repair the broken dam, and by about 4.30 we had got the upper hand.

Serajudin, an engine-driver, who was the messenger sent to the Amir, was instructed to shout out about the flood should he be detained by any of the guard that surrounded His Majesty, and also to apologize for not bringing a letter but only a verbal message.

The Amir, who was out on the mountains some two miles or so away, had had his attention drawn to the rising river, and, using a pair of strong field glasses, had seen some of our efforts to repair the dam. On hearing Serajudin's message, he at once set off for the works, bringing his Court with him.

Previous to this, Sirdar Nasarullah had sent down the Governor of the city to inquire into the trouble, and find out who was the man who had built the faulty dam! I told him this was not the time to bother about who had built the dam, but to set to work repairing it. Close on his heels came the Amir, who at once gave orders for the city alarm to be sounded for the fire-engines, and these soon turned up, being dragged by sappers and miners.

The Amir seemed to realize the seriousness

of the position, and remained there until dusk, teams of men being employed in baling, whilst others relieved those at the pumps.

It was now about the time of evening prayer. His Majesty called a page-boy, who is always in attendance with his prayer-rug, and, taking a compass out of his pocket, found out the direction of Mecca. Turning to the *moolah* who was standing near, he told him to give the *arsan*. The top room in the factory was soon swept clean, and there and then Habibullah Khan, Amir of Afghanistan, surrounded by his Court and boot machinery, went through his evening genuflexions.

CHAPTER XXII

A "TAMASHA" IN THE FAVOURITE QUEEN'S HAREM-SERAI

For five months during my first stay in Kabul, Miss Lena Brown, M.D., and her sister were also there, the former being in attendance upon the royal ladies and their children. After the Misses Brown left in July, I saw no other Englishwoman for about a year.

One day Queen Ulya Hazrat invited the Misses Brown and me to a grand *tamasha* in her harem-serai, in honour of the Amir's birthday, saying it would begin at 4 p.m.

Accordingly, my neighbours called for me, and we drove to the *ark* together, and arrived outside the ponderous doors of Ulya Hazrat's serai punctually at four o'clock.

There the noise of brass instruments was terrific, for His Majesty, in addition to having

a number of bands performing about his part of the *arrk* gardens, had given orders for a specially strong one to play by the harem-serai entrance, double forte, so that his lady-loves might hear inside its thick walls, and, judging by the noise the musicians created, at times I think they reached double fifty!

We passed guards and white-bearded door-keepers, who had been told to expect us, and were met by a tall woman dressed as a man, in turban and English suit of grey cloth.

This was Ulya Hazrat's messenger and chief shopper, and the only Mahomedan woman who is allowed to go unveiled about Kabul bazaars.

Along a white corridor, up a few steps, through archways, down more steps, and at last under the great hanging purdah itself, she piloted us. Then one of the whispering slave-girls was sent in to inform her mistress of our arrival.

Quickly coming out with salaams from the Queen, the girl took us through a drawing-room furnished with English chairs and sofa,

and under one of its many archways leading to the sleeping apartment.

There, all cool and quiet among her cushions on the floor, we found the greatest lady of Afghanistan ensconced, still wearing her morning suit of simple white linen and a skullcap. Before her was a tray filled with jessamine flowers, handfuls of which she sometimes threw about her room and bed-curtains to scent the place.

After paying compliments and receiving a kindly welcome, we were asked to sit for a little while with her. Evidently we had been invited to come early on purpose, so that a private interview could take place before the *tamasha* began.

Our hostess was a thorough Afghan, and, knowing it to be a strict rule of native etiquette that one must never sit higher than one's hostess, we joined her on the carpet. Her first question was to me, the new arrival in Kabul.

"Do you think me beautiful?" "Very," I replied. Then, after some moments of thought, "Who do you consider is more beautiful, yourself or myself?"

"Ah! How can you ask me such a question as that?" I exclaimed, "when you yourself are so lovely!" Then our hostess rested satisfied, and allowed the conversation to turn upon easier topics. Before long I got cramp, and was caught wriggling.

"Do your knees ache?" "They do very much." "Then you may now find chairs for yourselves in the drawing-room, and I will begin to dress," said she.

Retiring through one of the arches, we went and sat before a long window, to watch some young slaves unroll and arrange a huge rose-coloured carpet out in the serai, upon which Ulya Hazrat and her guests were to sit, and dance later. Old women were carrying a ladder from one gaily-painted lamp-post to another, busily trimming the oil-lamps, whilst impudent little pages ordered them about.

On a tank in the centre of the serai five white ducks floated, lazily watching the operations. Soon all was ready without, and ladies of Ulya Hazrat's establishment and visitors began to drop into the serai from different sides, in their

tamasha dresses, looking more like bright butterflies than human beings.

In silence, a few yards from us, we knew the Queen was busy before a cheval-glass making herself still more beautiful. At one end of the drawing-room, steps led up into a wardrobe, and barefooted slaves passed noiselessly to and from it, carrying boxes and bundles, out of which their mistress was selecting her clothes and jewels.

Until the toilet was completed her girls dared not speak. Then, with many salaams, she was ushered into the drawing-room. We, too, paid and received salaams, as though meeting her for the first time that day.

Tall and handsome, in tunic and bloomers of rich pink brocade, the latter garment finished at the ankles by a golden fringe which fell over smart patent-leather dress-shoes, the Queen stood before us, with her olive complexion totally transformed to a most delicate pink and white.

Upon her fine hands she wore white silk mittens and many rings; each nail was freshly

henna-splashed. The proud face was surmounted by a fringe of tiny black curls (which I was told as a secret were in reality feathers taken from the tails of wild drakes) and a golden embroidered cap, at the side of which were pink roses, and several ostrich-tips nodded. A spangled transparent veil fell back from her cap over the black satin hair-case.

Following in the trail of attar of rose which this picturesque figure left as it passed out, down the steps, across the carpet, and up another short staircase, we reached the *salaam khana*, or reception-room, and found it furnished with curtains and carpets only.

Here, at one end, sitting by the Queen, we watched all her guests approach in turn, and, kneeling, kiss a palm of her hand, then retire silently to allotted places by the walls.

When all had paid their salaams—and even the three other Queens did it—Ulya Hazrat rose, and passed from the *salaam khana* with her guests down into the serai square once more, this time to remain there.

Chairs were provided for the four Queens and

their mothers, we English ladies being also given some, but other guests soon seated themselves around the carpet's edge, in readiness for drinking tea.

A band of singers who accompanied themselves upon tambours sang, or rather howled, at intervals behind our chairs. A raucous-voiced woman came forward as soloist to sit in the centre of the carpet, facing Queen Ulya Hazrat, who called out to her names of any particular songs she was to render, "The Bleeding Heart" being a great favourite.

Under an apricot-tree near by, three nautch girls sang and posed, monotonously shaking and jangling their anklets as they advanced or retired, always keeping within the limits of their rug.

"They are going to sing of the four seasons," said a lady to us, and then the girls grew more interesting, gracefully imitating sowing and reaping, and finishing up the ditty with a tableau for "Winter," which they formed by sinking into a sleeping group, and throwing scarves over themselves to represent clouds.

A portly old lady, who delighted in cracking jokes, acted as mistress of ceremonies, stumping around with a long staff—her badge of office—which was painted beautifully and ornamented with a silver boss.

When tea appeared, a gold-lidded cup of it was placed on a wool mat and handed to Queen Ulya Hazrat, after which we were all served. In addition to drinking several cups of this green tea full of sugar, we were expected to eat a great many sweetmeats. A slave came to each of us, bearing a long tray filled with plates of sugared pistachios, corn, and almonds, diamond-shaped blocks of almond and walnut paste, and other native sweets.

Having placed the trays at our feet, the girl smiled and said: "These are all for you."

"But we cannot take so many; it is not our custom," said Dr. Brown, feeling embarrassed.

"Oh yes," was the girl's reply; "you must take home those you cannot eat here. That is *our* custom, you see."

The prettiest part of the *tamasha* was still to come. After refreshing herself, and when Bibi

Halima (who had been calmly saying prayers on a bandstand) had finished bobbing, Queen Ulya Hazrat stood up and gave the signal for the guests' nautch to begin. Quickly three elderly musicians gathered up their drums and tambours, made for the centre of the carpet, sat down, and commenced to play, branches of candles having been moved to the edges to make room for them. Then, amid a silky rustle of bloomers, the four queens and chief ladies of Kabul city laid their veils and trinkets in the laps of the spectators, formed themselves into a circle round the musicians, and began to revolve gently to the right.

In twelve-eight time the trim black shoes moved over the rosy carpet, their wearers bowing, posing, smartly clapping hands at each seventh beat, then half-turning to the audience, and in three more steps regaining their first position. Faster and faster worked the old musicians, with rapt faces turned upward, and open mouths, till they had the circle going at presto. Soon it began to contract and approach them, as one by one the dancers fell out, breath-

less, till at length only the last triumphant lady remained, and the nautch was over.

A long interval followed, during which the State pipe was handed about, and many compliments were paid to Ulya Hazrat upon her dancing and looks.

It was now seven o'clock, and the Misses Brown and I began to feel very hungry, for we had taken no food since midday. When the doctor requested leave to depart, however, the Queen asked: "Why? Are you not pleased with my *tamasha?*" Upon being assured that we were, the lady said: "Then stay a few more hours, and go with us upstairs with field-glasses to see what the men are doing in Amir Sahib's department."

We stopped for two hours longer, and then left. A slave-girl followed us to the *purdah* with three white bundles resembling Christmas puddings. They contained our sweets. It was such a relief to be outside again, and drive away from the noisy bands, through lines of tiny, blinking lamps shining in honour of the Lamp of Faith and Nation, back to our own houses.

I was informed by the faithful rag-bag-of-a-dish-washer, Rhaim, that my husband had been sent for, along with "Flyson Sahib" (our neighbour Mr. Finlaison), to attend the Amir's levée, but that my dinner was ready. Rhaim was left at home in charge of it by Akbar, the cook, who had gone to see the bazaar illuminations—things he no doubt thought were not in Rhaim's line at all. But a smile of intelligence overspread the dishwasher's features, making them quite good to see, when I gave him a big helping of sweets from my bundle—things he really could understand and appreciate.

After finishing off work and chaining up the door of his washing-up room, Rhaim shuffled downstairs with a *monkol* (charcoal stove) away to his kitchen, where he and Jelal used the half-spent fire to cook some rice for themselves. Bully and Martha, the dogs, gazed in at the doorway, greatly interested, hoping for bones.

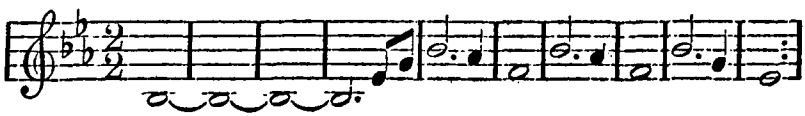
Silence reigned for a time, then two dusky figures scrambled up to the kitchen roof, arranged their bedsteads for the night, and sat down to share Rhaim's sweets. By the

light of a stable-lantern Rhaim carefully untied a part of his garments in which they were secreted, and arranged them on a scarf Jelal had spread. Again silence.

When all the sweets were gone, Rhaim began crooning, as usual, to the only tune he knew, a description of the day's events. His chief theme, of course, was "Sweets."

"Oh, Rhaim," said Jelal, "sing another tune."

"I have no knowledge of other tunes," was the reply.

THE DISHWASHER'S ONLY SONG.

A "JAPON."

IN THE COMPOUND, KABUL.

Showing servants' quarters and Martha's bungalow.

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CHAPTER XXIII

AFGHAN JUSTICE

THE late Amir Abdul Rahman Khan was a strong man in more ways than one, and often struck terror throughout his country by the dreadful penalties he inflicted upon prisoners who were brought before him. One day a baker was dragged into court, accused of selling short-weighted bread. The Amir was in an amiable mood that day, and after lecturing the thief upon his folly, said: "No man can prosper if he is not honest. Go away; work, as your Koran teaches you."

A few weeks later the man was found selling short weights again, and once more appeared before Amir Abdul Rahman. This time the Amir said: "You are not only a fool, but a rogue. I fine you 3,000 rupees, 3,000 annas, 3,000 pice. You will now be thrashed, and

then, as long as you grow hair upon your body, never come before me again."

Some months afterwards the baker was caught at his old game for a third time, and quickly hauled before the Amir. This time Abdul Rahman was in one of his sinister moods. Said he: "Let me see; I think you are a baker, aren't you?" "Yes, sahib." "And your breads are not quite the proper size?" "No, sahib." "Well, then, there must be some spare room in your oven." Bursting out into a furious passion, the Amir shouted: "Take him away, and bake him in his own oven!" And they did.

The present ruler, Habibullah Khan, is not so severe, yet at times he can make a gruesome jest as well as his father did. Some years ago I happened to be before him on a matter of business, when our conversation was interrupted by a bundle being thrown down inside the palace doors. It turned out to be a man who had been caught red-handed stealing money from a blind beggar-woman outside the palace gardens.

"What has this man done?" asked the Amir.

"Sahib," one of his captors replied, "he has stolen three rupees from a blind beggar-woman." "Three rupees!" said Habibullah musingly. "Yes; cut off three of his fingers." As the guard were removing their prisoner they were stopped. "Wait," was the order; "I will ask him a question."

Turning to the culprit, Habibullah inquired, "Which hand did you steal with?" "Sahib, my left hand." "Very well," said the Amir to the guard, "chop off the left hand, so that he may never steal with it again."

A Court butcher was summoned, and told to prepare boiling oil for cauterizing, and very soon the dreadful punishment was over.

When Habibullah Khan was preparing to go down to India in the autumn of 1906, there was much talking amongst the *moolahs*, who strongly disapproved of his action. One of them in Jelal'abad, bolder than his fellows, ventured to remark publicly, "Amir Sahib will never return to Afghanistan, and his going amongst the unbelievers will most likely make him become a bad Mussulman."

This was reported to the Amir, who summoned the *moolah* to Court, and addressed him thus: "I am told that you think I shall not return from India, but that my journey will make me a bad Mussulman. Is it true that you have said this, or not?"

The *moolah*, knowing there had been plenty of witnesses present when he made these remarks, said, "Yes, it is true. I did say so." "Then say it again now," was the command. The priest repeated his statements, and as he finished them Amir Habibullah cried, "Do not speak another word!"

Sending for a tailor, he made him sew up the lips of the *moolah*, saying, "His mouth shall not be opened should I return safely, but should I fail to return, open his mouth, and proclaim him a true prophet throughout Afghanistan."

CHAPTER XXIV

A DURBAR IN KABUL

It sometimes falls to the lot of Englishmen in Kabul to attend durbar. In June, 1906, the Amir gave a large durbar in honour of his birthday, which his English officials were invited to attend.

Upon inquiring whether we should come in morning or evening dress, we received this reply: "As assembly begins before 6.30 p.m., morning dress will be correct."

Arriving at the *arrk*, we were conducted by the Court Chamberlain to a marquee reserved for us, where tea and cigarettes were served. As our tent door opened towards the main drive in the gardens, we could see all guests arriving, and from generals down to junior officers, even to the chief bricklayer, all were arrayed in uniforms of various colours, and some displayed many medals.

Our ordinary frock-coats seemed dingy in such brilliant surroundings.

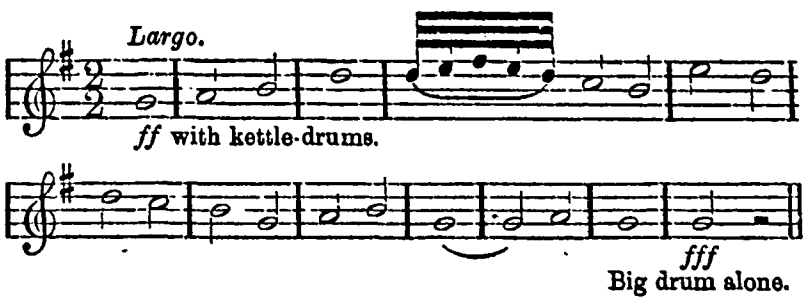
As the Amir has civil generals as well as military, to distinguish between the two, the former are not permitted to wear a chain across the black head-dress, which is not unlike a busby worn by English hussars.

Bands were marching about playing weird music; masters of the ceremonies and ushers were busy showing various guests to their seats. About an hour later a four-course dinner was served for us, followed by tea and cigarettes.

It was a warm evening, and as we were having our chairs taken outside the tent we heard the Afghan national anthem being played, announcing the approach of Sirdar Inyatullah Khan (the Amir's eldest son), who was soon followed by his uncle, Sirdar Nasarullah Khan (the Amir's brother), who is Prime Minister, as it were, in Kabul.

Meanwhile the gardens were being illuminated by thousands of fairy-lamps and Chinese lanterns, the long avenues and canals lending themselves to make a most picturesque effect.

About 9 o'clock a messenger arrived from the Chamberlain announcing that durbar was now commencing, and our presence was requested. Following him to His Majesty's *chamianah*, we advanced slowly and with much ceremony through long lines of standing courtiers to within twenty yards or so of His Majesty, halted, and bowed.



The Amir was seated upon a beautifully carved and gilded throne, which was upholstered in crimson velvet. He was wearing a Field-Marshal's uniform, medals covered his breast, and upon his head was a black astrakhan hat, in front of which glistened a large star of diamonds.

We passed the usual compliments, listened to a speech from him, and were ushered to seats close to the young Sirdars. Sundry speeches

were made from the throne upon different topics, and, singling out some prominent official, His Majesty would ask for his opinion on what he had said. Of course it was always, "By my eyes, Your Majesty has spoken very wisely!"

After this the Amir declared the formal durbar over, and said refreshments would then be served in the tents and *chamianahs*. "I shall speak to anyone, and I wish anyone to speak to me who likes to," said he.

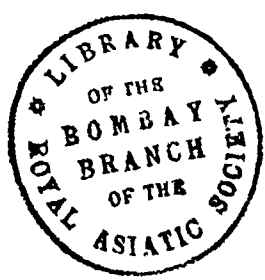
The evening's arrangements were excellently carried out, and had evidently been modelled from pictures and descriptions of a large fête in the *Illustrated London News*, which had been translated for the Amir a few days before.

Bands kept on playing, and gramophones twirled, whilst we just strolled about among the crowd, or sat chatting to various officials we knew. His Majesty was missing for a brief interval, then suddenly appeared in a dinner jacket, his only decoration now being the pale blue Order of St. Michael and St. George.

We at once rose from our chairs, but with a wave of the hand he bade us be seated, and,

turning to me, remarked, "I change clothes. I put night-dress on." I could hardly keep from smiling, and His Majesty saw it. "That not right?" he asked. "Not quite, Your Majesty. Evening dress is the proper name." He replied with a laugh, "Same thing, same time! Night-dress, evening dress!"

Of the many times when I have had the honour of seeing the Amir, never have I known him so free from care, and jolly, as he was that birthday night. His fête concluded with a grand display of fireworks. Mountains all around blazed with coloured lights, and cannon fired at intervals until early morning.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XXV

A JOURNEY DOWN

No Englishman can enter Afghanistan without an invitation sealed by the Amir, and though on his joining the Afghan Government service an agreement may be drawn up elaborately, stating when he shall be allowed leave, he never knows when he will get back across the border.

For one thing, it is considered by Afghans an insult to speed the parting guest, who, perhaps, has been longing to start for weeks, and possibly had cakes baked ready for his journey several times.

For another thing, such guests are often useful ones, for they will do no end of work in order to leave things nice, and give an impression that they can easily be spared for a time, and the Government finds plenty of odd things it would like to have done at the last minute.

In June, 1906, after spending fifteen months in Kabul, I was given a year's leave, and sent home with my wife to England to purchase machinery and do a good deal of shopping for the Amir.

This happened in the very hottest and worst time for travelling down to India, but, had leave not been accepted without hesitation, the Government might have forgotten all about it for another six months or a year perhaps.

On that occasion five Europeans and a Eurasian nurse were allowed to travel down, Mr. Donovan, Mrs. Winter, and her daughter being the only English people left in Kabul.

Daoud Mahomet, our *memondah* (visitor's conductor) was a splendid fellow for surmounting difficulties, and he met with plenty.

One of our company, Mr. Finlaison, an engineer, was unfortunately obliged to travel on a mattress within a specially-built *fujie* or litter, borne by men, for he had been unlucky enough to fracture his thigh ten weeks before, and was going home to have it operated upon.

A hundred carriers were granted for his *fujie*,

and our *memondah* had carte-blanche to seize any person or animal whose services he might require upon the road. Our party also included Mrs. Olney (an elderly American lady) and Mr. Butler, an English electrician, ninety-eight cavalry forming an escort.

It was half-past three on a Monday morning when the little cavalcade trailed out of our Kabul garden, which was all aglow with Shirley poppies, mignonette, and other English flowers, away through the great echoing dome of the Courts of Justice, and after the line of *yabboos* (baggage ponies), already disappearing into a distant cloud of dust.

About Kabul city, where the Amir often drives, all roads are watered before sunset, and for about six miles beyond it—that is, as far as Baghrami, one of his shooting-boxes—the road is fairly level, after which it merely becomes a collection of narrow tracks which pack-animals have formed.

In traversing the great Kabul plateau we passed through miles of wheat, every straw of it clean and erect. It was fast yellowing, and

from end to end of the fields grasshoppers were awake, and squeaking like thousands of unoiled sewing-machines.

A group of nine elephants in the distance before us had to be driven right into some fields whilst our horses passed, and stood swinging their trunks gently, seeming to say, "How foolish horses are, to be sure!"

Further away, in some marshy grass-land, another elephant was walking, choosing out now and then a specially juicy bunch of long, green grass, whilst a small boy rode on its head and gave it an occasional prod.

We passed innumerable newly-made garden trenches, carefully walled around, ready for growing cucumbers upon, and saw the ruins of many mud homes; then came out upon another stretch of earthy road, occasionally meeting heavily-laden pack-animals going up to Kabul.

A few lines of small trees told us we were near the Loger River, and very soon we had to cross it, by a peculiar boulder-paved bridge with low parapets.

At 9 a.m. the first short stage was finished,

and, arrived in Budkhak, we camped under some mulberry-trees outside the village. Horses and pariah dogs kept up such an incessant din, and it was so hot, that sleep was out of the question.

At 4.30 the next morning we started for a second short march, this day skirting hills and crossing moraines, our pack-animals being allowed to choose tracks for themselves pretty much, as the way was very undefined.

By eight o'clock we were winding down to Samoocha, a serai built in a gorge, where only a few sepoys lived, who possessed two cats and some hens, but no cow or other animals. As only a few hens and some eggs could be procured in this forlorn spot, we had to rely chiefly upon old tinned provisions.

Here, beside a streamlet, our tents were pitched. The temperature was 102 degrees, and vicious Samoocha flies added to our discomfort. On one side grass and a few trees were growing, but behind, and facing us, rose walls of rock surmounted by barren cones, forming a picture of utter desolation.

During the night Flink, a beautiful chestnut stallion I had ridden, managed to untie his halter, and before Jelal could find him, had a rare time, going round amongst the pack-animals, loudly challenging them to fight in the dark.

After an anxious twenty minutes and much splashing in and out of the stream, he was captured among our tents, dangerously near to the *fujie*.

At two o'clock on Wednesday morning we were glad to strike tents once more, and left Samoocha, dark as it was, a horsekeeper guiding us with his lantern down a steep narrow track, leading the front horse in my wife's *tachta-a-wan*, until one by one mountains appeared in their ghostly shrouds of mist, and it was safe to march on by the faint light of dawn.

The mere recollection of this place always brings back a taste of burning dust in the mouth, and I shall never forget a choking, pungent smell from wild sage-bushes growing there.

Away scampered leathery lizards and fat burying-beetles as our *yabboos* clattered over

the stones with spiteful little hoofs, clutching and picking their way as only hill-bred ponies can.

Thus our hardest march of the whole journey began, for in three-quarters of an hour we had reached an awful place, which marks the commencement of the Lattahband Pass.

Our path now lay through a chasm, where the mighty rocks seem to have been rent open by earthquake, and it is indeed a formidable business to get a caravan along over the deep bed of loose stones in it.

Hanging over our heads, from a pole fixed in the rock, was a cage like a beehive, of iron, placed there by the late Amir Abdul Rahman Khan, as a warning to robbers. It contains some slight remains of a man who was once caught after robbing travellers in a caravan just beneath.

Upon being brought up for trial he was asked by Amir Abdul Rahman: "Why did you steal?"

"Sahib," said the thief, "I was hungry, and stole that I might eat."

After thinking for a few moments, the sage ruler said: "As you say you committed this crime because of hunger, now go to work in my garden, and I will pay you 20 rupees a month."

Shortly afterwards, however, the thief ran away, and again was caught stealing, this time having been guilty of murder also. Once more he was brought before Amir Abdul Rahman, who said to him: "When last you came before me after stealing, you told me you did it because of hunger. I will make you much hungrier before I have done with you, my friend;" and commanded that a cage of iron should be made in his presence.

This was done, the robber being placed inside and the bands riveted around him, whilst Amir Abdul Rahman cheerfully conducted other business.

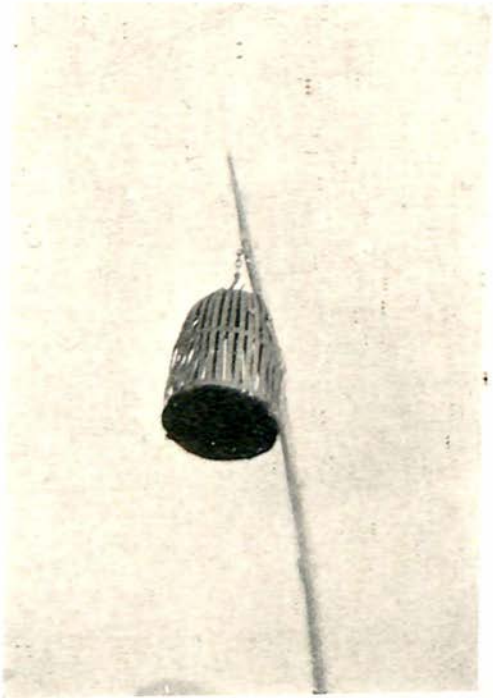
"Now," said he, when it was ready, "take him to the very spot where he committed the crimes, and set him up upon a pole to starve there, as a warning to all robbers, for I will not have my caravans molested and poor travellers robbed in my country."

A few yards farther along we came to a second cage, placed on the left side of the road by the present Amir, Habibullah Khan.

This is also made of iron bands, but is square, and much larger, for within it two robbers who murdered a man and two women at this spot some four years ago were put to starve. After being suspended, the men in this second cage lived for a week, going quite mad, and fighting together. Even now their whitened bones may be seen, and part of an old sheepskin coat hangs out between the bars, waving mournfully.

On we came, to begin the ascent, and only very slowly can it be accomplished. There was much excitement all along the march, for it is but a narrow track which takes us up to an altitude of 10,000 feet, and the travellers to be passed are many, moving in both directions.

Here are always encountered strings of nomadic reapers and cotton-gatherers, called *cochies*, journeying from one fertile district to another in search of work; but although they may be "on the road," these people do not belong to the unemployed by any means.



MAN-CAGE.

Erected by Amir Abdul Rahman Khan as a warning to robbers.

SECOND MAN-CAGE.

Erected by Amir Habibullah Khan, in which two murderers were starved to death.

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Each family has its cow or donkeys to watch and urge along, and as these animals bear in mounds upon their backs tents, poles, chatties, iron cooking-sheets, bedding, babies, and live hens, it is with much fluttering and many shrieks to Allah they are forced to the outer edge of the track till we get by.

But still worse to pass than these *cochie* people are the tall, slow, supercilious camels, with their projecting loads, which rock out over the precipice on one side and reach half across the road on ours. These, too, must be made to stand very still, and as near the edge as possible, to make room for the Englishman or his wife's *tachta-a-wan.*

In two wicker cages, closely covered over with scarlet, a camel often carries a woman and all her children, and several women will frequently be huddled together and rocked for thirteen days at his sides, thinking themselves very fortunate to be conveyed in such luxurious style to or from "Pian" (down below), as India is called up in Kabul city.

Struggling up towards the summit, we at last

come upon evidences of that superstition which has given the name of Lattahband to this wild and wind-swept region. Sticking out from the rock are a few gnarled and ugly old bushes, their blunted thorns being filled with shreds torn from the garments of many an anxious woman. Every scrap of colour tells its own pathetic little story, for it has been placed securely on a thorn there by some childless wife, who believes that if she can but leave a fragment of her old clothes (*lattah*) made fast (*band*) up here, a child will be born to her.

At the summit we halted for a few minutes, and, after exchanging the greetings "Remain not tired," "Remain alive," with our escort, gazed down upon Samoocha, Budkhak, and the far-distant yet dimly-visible city of Kabul lying in the haze, and longed for the end of this trying march.

Then our *yabboos* set to work upon descending, which is quite as fatiguing to pack-animals as the climb up. Long lines of *cochies* still kept meeting us, all bent on pushing and hurrying their beasts towards their goal — Samoocha

serai—where all of them would find shelter for the night.

The hopeless, barren dun-colour of our surroundings was slightly brightened here and there by patches of white bloom upon grey, scattered weed-bushes, an occasional star of a stonecrop, or sometimes a solitary club-mullein rising stiff and golden among the stones.

More and yet more precipitous grew the way, until we found ourselves in a second gorge, which looked as if a torrent of boulders had poured into it, and been arrested there. Down through these our animals clambered painfully and slowly, and the three *tachta-a-wans* and *fujie* were safely borne, all of us reaching Baricab at 8.30 a.m., the temperature, even at this hour, being 104 degrees.

At Baricab we camped under a group of trees upon a *sofa*. This *sofa*, or mud platform, is used by regiments when stationed in Baricab serai, and makes a fine lookout station. Sitting there, raised well above the crowd, we watched first the arrival and unlading of our *yabboos*, and then some manœuvres of their

keepers and our guard for victualling themselves, which is always a serious business.

One man was sent off with a wooden spade to divert a *jui* (small stream) running along the hillside above the serai, and soon welcome water came trickling down over the hot stones near our camp. Meanwhile two more men were busy building small fireplaces with stones, whilst others set about kneading dough.

Close by, *yabboos*, in rings of five, just relieved of the packs, moved slowly round and round, cooling. These were afterwards taken a few yards farther away, where some were tethered and others merely had their forefeet tied together.

Until 3.15 the following morning we stayed here, and then began to climb up from Baricab serai along a very rough road over a succession of hillocks, after which our track led up and down kotals all the way to Jugdulluk.

It was perfectly dark when we started that morning, and later we were greatly surprised to find that our imperturbable American friend and the nurse were far in advance of the pro-

cession. Having dressed an hour too soon, they climbed into their *tachta-a-wans* to wait for the rest of us, and fill up the time by having a nap. Their grooms, knowing the ladies were asleep, said nothing, but calmly led on their *tachta yabboos*. When the jolting woke up the two ladies, they could not protest, being unable to speak Persian, and so had to go on.

After we had marched for three-quarters of an hour, the light came softly. Very blue and pretty did the hills look as the sun gradually crept up behind them, until at length he peeped right over and revealed them in all their barrenness once more.

Again we met hundreds of weather-beaten men and women with burdened animals, some of the latter bleeding from pack-sores, or holes in their necks caused by oft-repeated prods from their drivers' wands.

Slowly the top-heavy creatures crawled along, their tiny calves or foals creeping close, and nuzzling by the balking packs of their dams.

On top of the rocking loads rode, as usual, brown bits of humanity, black-eyed and bare-

headed, their brothers and sisters, a size or two bigger, walking along with their mothers, sometimes riding astride their hips, as the women drove the four-legged furniture vans.

The road down into Jugdulluk is very steep, so we walked a good deal, and before 8 o'clock were safely under the grateful shade of its fine mulberry-trees, and could drink from a well of clear, cold water there, and revel in a delightful breeze which was blowing. This was the only place where we dared to drink unfiltered water.

No cows or sheep could we see, but the inevitable hens were killed and some eggs found, from which Akbar made a delicious omelette. We had the hens roasted, and used some of our treasured tea and tinned milk, which had been taken up to Kabul sixteen months before.

Near to Jugdulluk there is a ruby mine, but it is not properly worked. When it grew dark, a man came to the tent asking if I would buy a ruby, but knowing it to be Government property, I sent the man away, for traps of this

kind are sometimes laid by the Amir to test his foreign servants.

By 3.15 on Saturday morning our *yabboos* were again loaded, and we had a hot and fatiguing march down to Surkh Pul (Red Bridge), a serai dropped in a sandy basin in the mountains, where only five meagre trees were growing by a rushing torrent of brick-red water.

We dared not go into Surkh Pul serai for shelter, because the temperature was 106 degrees there, and at such times wasps and scorpions are plentiful about old mud buildings; so we had to make the best of a bad job, and camp in the scanty shade of the mulberries.

To everyone's horror, our orders, sent forward to Surkh Pul two days before by mounted messengers, had been utterly disregarded by the serai-keeper, who had made no preparations whatever for us, our guard, or animals. In such a place, with 200 people to feed, this was no trifling matter, and our *memondah* looked anxious.

When he had found the serai-keeper, Daoud Mahomet ordered some men to bring ropes,

and straightway suspended the culprit by his wrists in the doorway of his serai until everything we required was provided by his friends.

In two hours, bread, blocks of snow, wood, charcoal, hens, and fodder were all brought and served out to the famished company and animals.

All day long a burning wind blew, to, instead of from the river, bringing a storm of biting sand with it.

We had brought a large garden syringe in our kit, and with this the servants took turns at keeping the tents watered, whilst we got our meals or lay on camp-bedsteads trying to rest. But to breathe comfortably at all it was necessary to dip handkerchiefs in water and spread them on our faces, and as they dried in a few minutes, we got no sleep. When night came on, incessant lightning accompanied this sandstorm, and played around the rim of the great mountain basin, until Surkh Pul seemed a veritable Hades.

For bravado some men ride their horses through the river, and occasionally a man may

SURKH PUL (OR RED BRIDGE).

Five days from Kabul.

WATCHTOWER ON A FARM.

Afghan farmers employ watchmen to prevent thieves stealing their crops.

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be seen wading it, grabbing up bunches of his bloomers to keep them dry, a look of sudden surprise coming to his face when a stone slips over on his toes.

On Sunday morning, feeling very weary, we scrambled up to the Red Bridge, and so passed out.

A rugged track led us towards Nimla. That fine landmark came in sight at 7.30, lying far, far below—a patch of beautiful welcome green. Nimla is famous for its ancient trees, planted by the Emperor Baber several centuries ago.

Some of our guard were anxious to descend quickly, and, assuring us that a narrow side-track was quite passable for the *tachta-a-wan*, forthwith began to conduct us down it. Soon the *tachta* stuck between some boulders; my wife was hauled out, and much time was lost in getting the awkward conveyance up over the rough mountain-side until the proper path was struck some distance away from the spot where we had left it.

Daoud Mahomet, having meanwhile come along with the *fujie* and other *tachta-a-wans* to

the crest of the hill, looked down and saw us struggling over the rocks on foot. He came down to meet us, asking what was wrong, and upon learning that a mistake had been made, set to work and thrashed those men who were responsible for it with a triple whip which always dangled at his belt ready for emergencies.

However, we were all safely down in Nimla at 8.30, and soon found a way into the wonderful old Government garden there, with its towering cypresses and poplars, bronze cannas and delicate oleanders. A remarkable feature of this old garden is a wide cascade which divides it into two—reminding one of Chatsworth—and faces the house at its gates.

The building has a room at either end, a lofty veranda connecting them. Hornets and yellow wasps were busy in every nook of that veranda, and greatly resented our intrusion. It was a relief to get our meal finished and creep inside the muslin bed-curtains out of their way, though the heat was too great here for sleep until sundown.

But Fate was unkind. No sooner were we

settled for the night, after a dinner of tinned soup, hens, and native bread, than a Nimla band began to play for a wedding, and so all hope of slumber was abandoned. From 8 o'clock until 2.30 a.m. we endured the racket, then dressed, and, after drinking some tea, left Nimla in a horrible, hot wind, the temperature being 104 degrees.

To our right lay desert, whilst on the left hand was a broad strip of fertile plain by the river. Sometimes in the level desert and sometimes among long green rushes, passing often through shallow watercourses, and twice through swollen streams, we reached Bowley village at 7 o'clock on Monday morning.

After hunting around, it was decided that the camp should be made in a deserted Government garden, where there was a tumbledown house at one end and some dusty cypresses and orange-trees were growing. Our American friend and the nurse decided to brave the wasps, and took up their quarters indoors, but tents were put up for the rest of us upon some raised paths among the trees.

We imagined doves to be the only occupants of the garden, but later on a commotion took place, when four fine iguanas advanced in a group from one end of it towards our tents, to see who was daring to trespass on their preserves.

These creatures were about 3 feet 6 inches in length, and, although quite harmless, we were not sorry when they left our quarters and waddled back to their own.

Conditions were so unbearable at Bowley that we decided to make a forced march, and left for Jelal'abad just before sunset, travelling quickly across a desert, where often we saw distant clusters of sand-hills resembling hay-stacks; then, just as the moon appeared in a dull, coppery sky, our path wound in nearer to the river amongst giant rushes.

Here deep sand deadened the clatter of hoofs, and fire-flies moved like fairy-meteors over the long green ribbons. Hurrying along, a hot, moist wind still in our faces, we reached Jelal'abad at midnight, and were lodged in the garden of Supersalah Gholam Haider Khan.

A bungalow with three sets of rooms and many carved shutters stands at one end of it, facing a large space paved with black-and-white pebbles. Beyond the pavement lies an oblong tank, and from that a cascade flanked by paths leads down through orange-groves and beds of marigolds, stocks, and larkspur.

Trees of pink oleander, full of bloom, beside the tank, looked almost unearthly in their loveliness by the moon's gentle light; and the garden's lofty mud walls prevented any breath of wind coming in to stir the solemn stillness among its orange-trees.

Very soon, strewn all about the pavement and paths, were many sleeping figures, whilst here and there the guard kept watch, gun in hand, and a sentry walked silently up and down by the *fujie* and our bedsteads.

At Jelal'abad a day's rest is usually taken by travellers, so that pack-animals, drivers, and guard alike may be refreshed, and it is always advisable to give the latter enough money to provide themselves with a good mutton *pillau*, as they generally grow rather discontented after

marching for some days, and extra food improves the Afghan's disposition in a wonderful way.

Therefore on Tuesday all the *fujie* carriers and guards were fed at the visitors' expense, and then requested to take us on in the evening as far as Chardeh, for we were afraid to spend a clear day at Jelal'abad, lest our invalid or any of the party might develop fever.

Having heard that half a mile of our proper road along the river was washed down by the flood near Jelal'abad, Daoud Mahomet took five guides from the city, who professed to know where to find a track crossing the Chauligahri (Stony Desert), and for about fourteen miles we followed them whilst the moonlight waned.

As darkness came on, one by one they were all forsaking us, the single remaining guide being fast asleep on his donkey, which had gone perseveringly on for miles before we found it out. Upon being awakened and asked, "Where are we?" our guide replied, "I have forgotten." "But where is the road?" "Sahib, that, by the beard of the Prophet, is also forgotten!"

So we halted, and, striking a match to see what time it was, found we had been marching six and a half hours.

Daoud Mahomet, some distance behind with the *fujie*, seeing our light sparkle for a moment, made for it, and at last came up with us, saying he himself had fortunately discovered the track, so we followed him back to it.

At 2.45 on Wednesday morning we arrived at an evil-smelling collection of hovels called Baricab Pian, and were told that water was very bad there, and many persons sick. All its inhabitants seemed to be sleeping out on the sand, and we had to pick our way very cautiously among them. Being just about exhausted, we spread out our rugs on the ground by some trees near, and lay down for an hour, then started off once more to find a place fit to camp in.

This time, determined to have a reliable guide, we commandeered the priest of Baricab Pian, and compelled him to lead our procession. He did it most unwillingly, because dawn was near. Many times did the old man

turn, imploring the guard riding on either side of him that he might be allowed to go back and call his people to prayer, but we and the guard were obdurate until Chardeh was in sight.

It was 6 o'clock when we reached the parched grey pine-trees of Chardeh, to find their shade already occupied by cotton-spinners, who had numerous grass arbours built among the twisted branches, and were busily working. These gentlemen, who certainly did not waste their money on clothes, were ordered to clear away their primitive spinning-tackle to make room enough for us also under the trees, and as their attitude towards us became very unfriendly in consequence, a double guard was set about the camp, no stranger being allowed to pass near it.

Chardeh hamlet lies nearly a mile from the right bank of Kabul River, from which all drinking water had to be fetched, as the only village well was a bad one.

Groups of half-naked children watched us with absorbing interest, and were delighted when they found that we wanted water badly and would pay them for it. Off they ran to their

mothers in the mud hovels, and reappeared bearing the family chatties (earthenware vessels), with which they scuttled down to the river as fast as their brown legs would take them, soon coming back with full chatties and eyes aglow at the thought of pice. Eagerly they asked if they could next help to lead our pack-animals down to water.

We were by this time well accustomed to tea seasoned highly in various ways, and especially to the strong, leathery taste of the *mashk* (water-skin), but here quite a variation in flavours was afforded us, for even after being boiled and filtered the water still tasted strongly of earth and pine-needles.

Excepting at meal-times, we lay very still all day, being too fatigued to trouble about anything besides filtering the water. It was a lucky thing, too, for Chardeh was infested with centipedes and scorpions, and to disturb those creatures always means disaster. One poor fellow on sentry-go at night was severely stung.

We decided to make a little march of three

hours to Basawal, and reached that village at 6 o'clock next morning, choosing a spot by the river bank for camping. But though we were under some fairly large trees here, the heat was appalling, for wind, like the blast from a furnace, filled the air with fine dust.

Just after sunset we began the last march on Afghan territory. There was a brilliant moon that night, and it was well for us that our guard was a strong one, for the Border is swarming with thieves, who lie in wait patiently till they spy a weak part in some caravan, and can attack with a fair chance of success.

No less than six of these gentlemen did Daoud Mahomet take prisoner, and every one of them carried a Lee-Enfield rifle bearing English Government marks. It was evident their arms had been stolen from over the Border.

After tying his prisoners' hands behind them and removing the bolts from their rifles, Daoud Mahomet made them walk with us to Dakka, where he handed them over to the Serhang (Governor), who, no doubt, would allow them

their freedom again as soon as we were out of his district.

Reaching Dakka at 1 a.m., we lay down on the river-bank till dawn broke, when our escort was reinforced by a company of Cassadars (Afghan Militia), and we crossed the Border. Near Landi Khana the Cassadars' place was taken by a welcome escort of Khyber Rifles, sent down from Landi Kotal to meet us, and these conducted us safely to the fort, where we were shown every kindness by Major Webb-Ware and his wife.

In order to expedite the passage of our invalid to Peshawar, a special order for the Khyber to be opened at midnight on Friday was granted. We had telegraphed from Landi Kotal for a phaeton to be sent up, hoping that Mr. Finlaison's mattress could be fixed upon it, but found this impossible. So on went the *fujie*, with its hundred carriers, down to Jamrud Station, where an engineers' saloon carriage was waiting for it. As the *fujie* could not be made to go inside this, after having parts of its woodwork and handles sawn off, it was at last

lifted into a covered luggage-van, and finished the journey quite safely to Peshawar, where our invalid rejoiced to see friends who had come from Calcutta to receive him. Other members of our party drove down from Landi Kotal to Peshawar in about five hours, and there separated.

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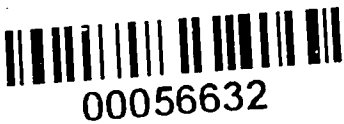
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